

LEARNING ON THE MOVE, OSS DETACHMENT 101
SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN BURMA

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ABSTRACT

LEARNING ON THE MOVE, OSS DETACHMENT 101 SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN BURMA, by Major David P. Coulombe, 182 pages.

In order to meet the challenges of the anticipated operating environment, America's Special Operations Forces (SOF) must be able to adapt to any terrain, local culture, adversary, or mission set. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Detachment 101 provides current SOF a historical model for building organizational adaptability and resiliency while at the same time executing special operations against a highly capable opponent. This thesis employs case studies and historical narratives to analyze Detachment 101's operational evolution and its ability to adapt to varying conditions in the Burma Theater from 1942 to 1945. OSS Detachment 101 defeated Japanese forces in Burma by evolving into a learning organization that could rapidly adapt to changing environments and intuitively design operational solutions in action. This adaptability and intuitive approach to problem solving enabled the successful assessment, integration with, and employment of a highly capable indigenous partner force, the development of a campaign planning capability that could link small unit actions to strategic objectives, and the development of a liaison network that could ensure SOF-CF interdependence. A subtle combination of the right personnel, unit culture, operational freedom, and leadership created the necessary conditions for Detachment 101 to become a learning organization.

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ACRONYMS

CBI	China Burma India Theater
CF	Conventional Forces
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps (US Army)
COI	Office of the Coordinator of Information
DA	Direct Action
DOD	Department of Defense
DOTMLPF	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities
G2	Army Intelligence
HF	High Frequency
HQ	Headquarters
MAC-V-SOG	Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Studies and Observation Group
MEDCAP	Medical Civic Action Program
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
MO	Morale Operations Branch (OSS)
MSS	Mission Support Site
MU	Maritime Unit Branch (OSS)
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Command
OG	Operational Groups (OSS)
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
OSS	Office of Strategic Services

OWI	Office of Wartime Information
PE	Preparation of the Environment
PR	Personnel Recovery
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
R&A	OSS Research and Analysis Branch
R&D	OSS Research and Development Branch
RV	Rendezvous Point
S&T	OSS Schools and Training Branch
SEAC	South East Asia Command
SI	Secret Intelligence Branch (OSS)
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service (British)
SOE	Special Operations Executive (British)
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SR	Special Reconnaissance
STOL	Short Take Off and Landing
TGO	Terminal Guidance Operations
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
USAAF	US Army Air Forces
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VSO	Village Stability Operations
X-2	OSS Counterintelligence Branch

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

America's modern Special Operations Forces (SOF) took root in the Second World War with the creation of legendary organizations such as Darby's Rangers, Merrill's Marauders, the 1st Special Service Force, and the Office of Strategic Services. Observing the British and German efforts to develop and employ such units, a small number of American military leaders envisioned the seamless integration of irregular warfare with conventional military maneuver. Although their rise to prominence in the American way of war is recent, the presence of irregular, commando-like forces supporting larger military campaigns has existed throughout the annals of military history.

Despite the conventional military's often skeptical and apprehensive outlook on these irregular forces, American history has had a special affinity for these units since their first appearance under the command of Major Robert Rogers in the French and Indian War. Rogers, a self-taught soldier from the then untamed American wilderness, created some of the first standing Ranger units in American military history, thereby earning the title of "grandfather of America's SOF" through his influence on guerrilla warfare and light infantry skills.¹ Despite the historical interest placed on their daring small unit actions, SOF have traditionally operated under the doctrinal imperative that their actions would serve as shaping effects for larger conventional operations. Modern US Army Special Operations doctrine further supports this traditional viewpoint by

¹ John Ross, *War on the Run* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2009), 452.

outlining the surgical strike and special warfare capabilities that SOF can provide in support to the Joint Force Commander.² However, the paradigm of commando forces and irregular guerrilla elements supporting larger conventional operations has waned as the most recent conflicts of the last twenty years have demonstrated. Future contingencies may reverse the traditionally supporting role of SOF and center special operations activities as the decisive operation of a campaign.

Actions in Somalia in 1993 as well as the initial invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 demonstrated the utility of SOF and their irregular brand of warfare as the decisive operation for a campaign where conventional forces were not suitable, prepared, or politically acceptable for application against a problem set. The Department of Defense further enhanced this SOF-led methodology by directing the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to take the lead in developing and synchronizing a global campaign against Al Qaeda and its affiliates.³ Most recently since 2010, conventional US Army units assigned to conduct Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan found themselves under the command and control of Special Operations forces and for a short time generating discussion on the creation of a separate warfighting function for Special Operations.⁴ Although this separate warfighting function has yet to materialize, the 2014 Army Operating Concept “Win in a Complex World” emphasizes

² United States Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 1.

³ Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2013), 66.

⁴ Bennet Sacolick and Wayne Grigsby, “Special Operations/Conventional Forces Interdependence: A Critical Role in ‘Prevent, Shape, Win’,” *Army Magazine*, June 2012, 40-42, accessed September 28, 2014, <http://www.ansa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2012/06/Pages/default.aspx>.

the continuously growing importance of special operations as a core competency of the US Army.⁵

As the United States continues to face a new series of hybrid threats such as Al Qaeda and the most recent rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Special Operations Forces will likely continue to serve as the lead US DOD organization in the conduct of irregular wars in the 21st Century. SOF offer a viable and discrete element of military power that can employ two complementary forms of special operations, special warfare and surgical strike, to counter hybrid threats.⁶ Furthermore, despite the fiscal constraints of the US Government, which have resulted in a downsizing of US military personnel, Special Operations Forces will continue to grow from 66,000 to an end strength of 69,700.⁷ Consequently, US SOF will increasingly find themselves in situations where conventional force support is either unavailable completely or substantially below levels enjoyed in the past. The changing environment will not only demand new approaches to logistics but also the ability to carefully map and understand the human terrain, and develop operational approaches in both lethal and non-lethal means to affect the human domain.

The human domain requires further explanation due to its position outside the joint doctrine that currently limits the operational environment to include the distinct

⁵ United States Army, *US Army Operating Concept Win in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014), vi.

⁶ United States Army, ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, 9.

⁷ Nick Simeone, "Hagel Outlines Budget Reducing Troop Strength, Force Structure," *DoD News*, February 24 2014, accessed October 21, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121703>.

physical domains of land, maritime, air, space, as well as the information domain.⁸

Scholars in both conventional and special operations communities argue that the aforementioned domains in Joint Publication 3-0 *Operations* fail to adequately address the moral, social, and cognitive aspects of the human terrain and consequently, a theory exists that SOF operate in a yet unrecognized domain.⁹ USSOCOM defines the human domain as “the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military strategy, operation, or tactical action depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts.”¹⁰ This idea is central to the operational design of SOF peculiar campaigns and serves as a continuous steering mark to develop population centric operational approaches.¹¹

In addition to the evolving nature of hybrid threat groups, the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) outlines several characteristics of the current operational environment that will require continuous, proactive, and responsive special operations below the threshold of war. USASOC envisions that geopolitical constraints, US Government reluctance to act overtly through conventional forces, and the ever-increasing information and military capabilities of both hostile nation states and non-state

⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), IV-1.

⁹ Brian Petit, *Going Big by Getting Small* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2013), 43.

¹⁰ United States Army Special Operations Command, *USASOC Planner's Handbook for SOF Operational Design* (Ft. Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2013), VI-7.

¹¹ Ibid.

actors will increase the demand for SOF led campaigns and major operations.¹² The ability of America's Special Operations Forces to continuously assess and adapt to their operational environment is imperative for future success in military campaigns. However, US SOF often default to institutional paradigms to leverage against the dynamic problems of the current operational environment.

The doctrine, organization, training, materials, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) required by future SOF units to succeed in any environment is a subject of constant debate within the Special Operations Community. An analysis of past operations and an extrapolation of applicable lessons for the present provide useful contributions to this debate. Before the rise of standing Special Operations doctrine, America's early SOF did not have the luxury of implementing schoolhouse solution sets and designed each solution as a campaign unfolded. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Detachment 101 in the Burma Theater of the Second World War stands as a model for inter-agency capabilities, military innovation, cultural navigation, and, above all, an ability to constantly adapt and operate within the decision cycle of an adversary.

Road to War 1937

The Pacific Rim was already long ablaze before the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Although the actions of the Japanese Empire were on an inevitable collision course with the United States and the British Empire, since the early 1930s Japanese designs of domination fixated on China. Japan had built enclaves of political influence in China and its efforts to subjugate the Chinese Republic eventually

¹² Ibid., II-5.

led to a full-scale war in July 1937. The Japanese occupied China's major seaports in 1938 as part of a strategy to cut the links between the countries' interior, where Chinese resistance elements enjoyed sanctuary, from maritime commerce.¹³ Consequently, the Chinese government came to rely upon landlines of communication from Southeast Asia and the Soviet Union.

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 severely limited the ability of European powers to support China. The capitulation of France resulted in the closure of a critical railway from French Indochina, and consequently Chiang Kai-shek actively sought support from the United States.¹⁴ Despite strong public support in both official and private channels of the United States Government, including then US Military Attaché COL Joseph Stillwell, the United States sought to avoid confrontation with the Japanese.¹⁵ By the summer of 1940, the British were barely holding off the Nazis' aerial onslaught in the Battle of Britain. Consequently, the United States determined that it was best to avoid any action that would push the Japanese towards an alliance with Germany and as a result place even greater strain on the British military.¹⁶ However, continued escalation of Japanese aggression spurred the United States to reconsider its tacit support for the Chinese. The arrival of Claire Chennault as military advisor to Chiang Kai-shek,

¹³ Troy Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 3.

¹⁴ Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *US Army in World War II: The China Burma India Theater* (Washington, DC, Center for Military History United States Army, 1987), 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

President Roosevelt's approval of the Lend-Lease Act in early 1941, the establishment the American Volunteer Group also known as the "Flying Tigers" marked the transition to active American support for the Chinese War effort.¹⁷

Despite the looming threat of the Japanese military, the US military viewed Germany as the greatest threat. In the summer of 1941, while the German Wehrmacht swept eastward into the Soviet Union, President Roosevelt directed the US Army and Navy to outline a strategic war plan and the necessary supporting means should the United States enter into a state of war against Germany and Japan.¹⁸ Subsequently, the US military developed a strategy to defeat Germany first and then focus on the final defeat of the Japanese Empire. The RAINBOW 5 war plan utilized strategic bombing, blockades, subversion, and peripheral offensive operations to exhaust the German military before building up the necessary combat power to forcibly enter the European continent and decisively defeat Germany on its own ground.¹⁹ In the secondary Pacific theater of war, RAINBOW 5 outlined the containment of Japan through air and naval power, Soviet Siberian divisions, and the indirect employment of China's inexhaustible manpower.²⁰

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent entry of the United States into the Second World War, the United States found itself on the defensive

¹⁷ Ibid., 14-19.

¹⁸ United Army Center of Military History, *American Military History Volume II: The United States in a Global Era, 1917-2008* (Washington, DC: United States Army, 2010), 81.

¹⁹ Ibid., 82.

²⁰ Ibid.

in the Pacific while attempting to mobilize its economy and population for a global conflict. This conflict between the Chinese and the Japanese Empire offered the United States a strategic option to widen a second front that would divert Japanese forces and resources from full application against the US Military in the Pacific Theater. However, the efforts of the Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek faced a serious threat when the Japanese invaded Burma in 1942 thereby threatening to cut access to American supplied military aid.²¹

The primary objective of the campaign in the China Burma India (CBI) Theater centered on keeping China in the war against Japan and therefore indirectly enabling the advance of US forces in the Pacific. The main task to support this strategic objective was reopening China's overland supply route so the Chinese Nationalists could continue their actions against the Japanese.²² The limited resources directed towards the CBI Theater left Lieutenant General Joseph Stillwell desperate for any support and apathetic as to the conduct of "special operations" in his theater of war.²³ This amorphous and under resourced theater enabled Coordinator of Information (COI) Brigadier General William Donovan to expand his vision of irregular warfare through the establishment of Detachment 101. The COI would later transition to the Office of Strategic Services in June of 1942.

²¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 3.

²² David Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History Department of the Army, 1992), 97.

²³ *Ibid.*, 98.

From its inception, Detachment 101 was unlike other OSS activities throughout the Second World War. Detachment 101 included civilian and military elements from the different OSS operational directorates including Secret Intelligence, Special Operations, Operational Groups, Maritime Unit Branch, and Morale (Psychological) Operations.²⁴ This level of unified action was unparalleled in any other US Military or OSS operation in the Second World War due to the flexibility and capability to engage in such a wide degree of military and intelligence actions. Nevertheless, Detachment 101 faced incredible challenges in arguably the lowest priority of the entire RAINBOW 5 war plan. CBI was an economy of force operation for both the OSS and the regular Army forces under the Command of General Stillwell. Resource constraints coupled with the challenging local terrain and ethnic variables demanded that these isolated Americans accomplish more with less. By the end of the Second World War, Detachment 101 had grown to control nearly a division worth of indigenous guerrillas and a task force of land, air, and maritime assets that conducted special operations ranging from sabotage and intelligence collection to supporting of conventional military operations throughout the CBI Theater.²⁵ The role of Detachment 101 as a special operations force far surpassed the impact of other special operations units throughout the Second World War due to the relative scarcity of conventional forces. Similarly, America will demand similar results from modern day SOF, as large-scale military campaigns become the exception rather than the norm.

²⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 18.

²⁵ Ibid., 222.

Research Questions

Analysis of OSS Detachment 101's ability to assess and adapt to their operational environment against the Japanese in Burma between 1942 and 1945 provides modern day special operations soldiers a model learning organization. Emergent themes in the analysis of Detachment 101's operational evolution across the force development framework of DOTMPLF may further provide lessons that our current special operations forces can apply to assess and adapt to future operational environments. In order to reach the conclusions necessary for this aforementioned research topic, this work will address several secondary research questions and topics. First, additional research into the primary OSS organizational models prior to the activation of Detachment 101 will enable a clear understanding on how the initial force structure of the OSS, already revolutionary in nature, either supported or detracted from its ability to become a learning organization. Additionally, an analysis of the institutional cultures from OSS's primary branches of secret intelligence, special operations, operational groups, moral operations, and maritime unit will provide a significant understanding on how these different branches coalesced into a single unit identity over a three-year period.

Research will then focus on the strategic expectations for Detachment 101 to include Bill Donovan and Joe Stillwell. Since Detachment 101, like all SOF units past and present, served multiple masters, it is important to gain an understanding of the varying visions that different strategic and operational level commanders held for employment of the unit. Contrasting and comparing these visions and the higher levels of guidance they produced with the individual unit visions of Carl Eifler and William Peers, the two Detachment 101 commanders, will further contribute to understanding

developments in the DOTMLPF domains. Finally, background research provides a social overview of the Kachin people, who served as the primary indigenous force in Detachment 101's operations. Understanding Detachment 101's ability to successfully operate within the human domain requires contextual data regarding the culture of the Kachin and the necessary efforts to build a relationship with the indigenous population.

This background research will make it possible to analyze the ability of Detachment 101 to assess and adapt to their environment. Research will focus on these traits in a sequential fashion by years of the conflict. This temporal analysis will demonstrate changes over time while identifying a corresponding relationship to operational success. Research will utilize the DOTMLPF force development framework to analyze changes in Detachment 101 over time. Firsthand accounts from the officers and men of the organization will be used to determine trends and themes that enabled success over the course of the Burma Campaign.

Limitations and Parameters of the Research

In utilizing the DOTMLPF framework for historical research, the study of Detachment 101's facilities and materials will be limited in order to exclude those that would routinely exist in other military units. Generally, the standard facilities required to conduct sustained operations or the US Government issued equipment needed to conduct combat action will be omitted from this study unless it has some important bearing on Detachment 101's ability to adapt said materials and facilities to the Burmese environment. This study will examine materials or facilities that were of particular significance to the development of indigenous support mechanisms or the area complex. Current SOF doctrine defines the area complex a "clandestine, dispersed network of

facilities to support resistance activities in a given area . . . include[ing] a security system, guerrilla bases, communications, logistics, medical facilities, and a series of networks capable of moving personnel and supplies.”²⁶

This study utilizes the lens of doctrine to analyze Detachment 101’s activities in Burma. Modern Special Operations doctrine and joint definitions are vastly different from those used by the OSS in the Second World War. However, since the roots of current Special Operations doctrine lie in what the OSS did during that war, the doctrines and definitions are related. The intended objective of this research is to enrich the current ongoing doctrinal discussions amongst the Special Operations community by examining DET 101’s operations from the perspective of current Special Operations doctrine and other selected DOTMLPF domains. In order to accentuate the relevance of past events to the present activities, this study will compare equivalent OSS doctrine, when such existed, to present day concepts.

Critical Definitions

This study utilizes the phrase “special operations” as the umbrella term for all Detachment 101 operations in Burma. This term, which existed informally in the doctrine of the 1940s, serves as a frame to bridge both past and present doctrinal concepts. OSS doctrine did not include current day terms such as unconventional warfare, special warfare, surgical strike, direct action, special reconnaissance, or preparation of the environment. Instead, the only actual definition provided in the OSS Provisional Basic Field Manual is an umbrella term of “strategic services” to describe critical functions that

²⁶ United States Army, Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-05.1, *Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), 2-22.

included secret intelligence, research and analysis, secret operations, strategic service planning, and strategic services support.²⁷ Furthermore, the OSS stated that “‘Strategic Services’ includes all measures (except those pertaining to the Federal program of radio, press, publication, and related foreign propaganda activities involving the dissemination of information) taken to enforce our will upon the enemy by means other than military action, as may be applied in support of actual or planned military operations or in furtherance of the war effort.”²⁸

Because strategic services is so expansive a term, it lacks the utility and depth required in describing Detachment 101 mission sets, which primarily fall under the functions of secret intelligence and secret operations. Furthermore, a majority of Detachment 101 missions originated from OSS branches under the secret operations function. The term special operations appears frequently throughout other OSS Field Manuals to include *Special Operations Field Manual Strategic Services* and *Operational Groups Field Manual Strategic Services*. Writers and soldiers from the period appear to use the term “special operations” interchangeably with the term secret operations during the conduct of the Second World War. Barring the existence of any formal definition for either special operations or secret operations in OSS doctrine, this study uses the term special operations to describe Detachment 101 operations in Burma. The use of special operations is not to be confused with the OSS Special Operations (SO) Branch, which conducted subversion, sabotage, and direct action and whose operatives were critical

²⁷ Office of Strategic Services, *Provisional Basic Field Manual Strategic Services* (Washington, DC, Office of Strategic Services, 1943), 1-4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

members of Detachment 101.²⁹ Furthermore, this definition is not intended to be an equivalent to the current Joint Publication 3-05 definition of special operations as “operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk.”³⁰ The closest modern doctrinal terms that can be associated with Detachment 101’s activities are unconventional warfare, psychological operations, preparation of the environment, personnel recovery, special reconnaissance, direct action, special warfare, and surgical strike.

The following definitions originate in either Joint Publication 3-05 *Special Operations* or Army Doctrine Publication 3-05 *Special Operations*. Unconventional warfare (UW) is “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”³¹ Psychological Operations or Military Information Support Operations (PSYOP/MISO) are “planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of

²⁹ Office of Strategic Services, *Special Operations Field Manual Strategic Services* (Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 1944), 1.

³⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), GL-12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, GL-13-GL-14.

foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals.”³² Preparation of the Environment (PE) is an “umbrella term for operations and activities conducted by selectively trained special operations forces to develop an environment for potential future special operations.”³³ Personnel Recovery (PR) is the “sum of military, diplomatic, and civil efforts to prepare for and execute the recovery and reintegration of isolated personnel.”³⁴ Special Reconnaissance (SR) is “Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.”³⁵ Direct Action (DA) “Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets.”³⁶ Special Warfare is “execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.”³⁷ Surgical Strike is

³² Ibid., II-16.

³³ Ibid., GL-11.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., GL-13.

³⁶ Ibid., GL-7.

³⁷ United States Army, ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, GL-3.

“execution of activities in a precise manner that employ special operations forces in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats.”³⁸

Literature Review

There is an average to limited amount of literature dedicated to the actions of Detachment 101 in Burma. The majority of this literature focuses on the exploits of the campaign as well as the fighting abilities of the men assigned to this command. However, there are a large number of historical works that focus on the Burma Theater of operations. These works address the command of General Stillwell, the British actions in the theater, the operations of Merrill’s Marauders, and to a lesser extent the importance of special operations in the theater. These works as well as the plethora of historical research regarding the OSS in the Second World War contain critical information regarding Detachment 101 in small narrative passages.

This study analyzes the existing literature to identify the actions that Detachment 101 personnel and leaders undertook to assess and adapt to their operational environment. Furthermore, the literature review examines OSS organizational structure to provide background on how varied operational branches influenced and interacted with each other when functioning under the unified command of Detachment 101. This thesis applies the DOTMLPF framework to evaluate and compare Detachment 101’s organization, capabilities, and effects throughout the Burma Campaign. As necessary, a cultural analysis of the Kachin population, which comprised a vast majority of the

³⁸ Ibid.

indigenous forces under Detachment 101 control, provides an understanding of how OSS members adapted their operations to the local customs and culture of the Kachin people.

Troy Sacquety's work *The OSS in Burma* contains the most detailed and holistic description of Detachment 101 in Burma. This extensively researched work focuses on the development and operational success of Detachment 101 over the course of the Burma campaign. Additionally, this book capitalizes on Sacquety's service as a historian for USSOCOM, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the OSS Detachment 101 Association to consult numerous primary sources regarding Detachment 101. Another work that provides tremendous insight into the development of Detachment 101 from a personal narrative perspective is *Behind the Burma Road* by former Detachment 101 commander William Peers. Peers wrote this work as well as several other shorter articles that highlight OSS operations in Burma. Each of these works describe Detachment 101's contribution to modern special operations doctrine as well as their actions in the past as a model for today's SOF, however, they fail to address the evolution of this organization across the force development domains of DOTMLPF or the development of the unit into a learning organization.

Several other firsthand accounts of Detachment 101 operations have been written by former unit members to include *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma* by Richard Dunlop, *At the Dragon's Gate: With the OSS in the Far East* by Charles Fenn, and professional military journal articles by William Wilkinson and Knight Hale. The level of detail in these works varies, but most focus on purely tactical actions in narrative form. Dunlop's work provides a greater insight into the strategic level implications of the theater, especially when taken in conjunction with his biography of William Donovan,

Donovan America's Master Spy. Dunlop's works provide an excellent connection of Detachment 101 actions to the strategic context of the theater and the war as a whole. In both these personal accounts as well as the peripheral discussions of Detachment 101 actions in other historical works on the CBI, analysis of unit actions can provide details as to how Detachment 101 demonstrated organizational adaptability.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this thesis is primarily qualitative in nature focused on the use of case studies and narrative analysis. The use of case study analysis will determine common themes and trends throughout personal accounts and observations in available literature regarding the learning process and introspective self-analysis of Detachment 101 members prior to and after operational engagements. Furthermore, case studies from major actions and throughout Detachment 101's campaign in Burma will develop a narrative regarding the organization's ability to change over time. There are several firsthand accounts from operatives in Detachment 101 and a narrative analysis will provide first hand insight into how OSS Detachment 101 members transformed themselves and became a learning organization over time.

Finally, this thesis will utilize qualitative research regarding Detachment 101 organization and techniques versus their operational effectiveness throughout the Burma Campaign to determine the impact of organizational changes and the circumstances that drove change. In all aspects of organizational change, the author will use the DOTMPLF force development framework to provide an organizational construct for the development of Detachment 101 mission sets, organization, techniques, and institutional culture. Measures of effectiveness and performance to evaluate Detachment 101's operations will

include analysis on the strength of their relations with the Kachin tribes, supporting operations and command relationship with conventional forces, casualties inflicted on enemy forces, enemy force attitude towards the Kachin rebels, the number of US isolated personnel recovered, and finally the ability to maintain open communication lines from Burma towards the Chinese interior.

CHAPTER 2

IN THE BEGINNING 1941 AND 1942

Donovan's COI Creates Detachment 101

While the European and Asian continents proceeded along a course of military mobilization that would ultimately culminate in the Second World War, the United States of America observed the rise of fascism behind its vast oceanic perimeter with a disapproving yet non-committal policy. Traditional historical narratives depict the United States as a sleeping giant; domestically focused on the economic and social fissures of the Great Depression when Japan's surprise aggression pulled the unwilling nation into global conflict. However, although the Japanese achieved complete tactical and operational surprise across the Pacific from late 1941 to 1942, multiple agencies of the United States Government were well aware of the global strategic situation and viewed American involvement as inevitable. For much of the 1930s War Plan ORANGE dominated the training and planning efforts of US military leaders to fight against Japan in what primarily would be a naval conflict in the central pacific with fiercely contested land engagements in harsh jungle warfare.³⁹

Additionally, numerous American political leaders concluded America's involvement in war was inevitable. Among such senior American politicians was the US Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph P. Kennedy, who opined at the inevitability for America's involvement with his report to the *Boston Globe* that "democracy is finished in

³⁹ Barry Watts and Williamson Murray, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 337.

Europe.”⁴⁰ Intermixed between the two worlds of the military and American politics was William J. Donovan. Donovan’s ability to move across political, military, and social circles while at the same time building a network of personal influence through charisma would define not only his own personality but also the organization that he would create and lead, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). One of the first mission sets that Donovan undertook in his role as America’s chief of espionage was the creation of Detachment 101 in the CBI Theater. Detachment 101 represented a vision of warfare formulated by William Donovan throughout the course of his professional life and provided a means to advance his fledgling intelligence organization in the American national security apparatus. Since the inception of Detachment 101 began with Donovan it is important to conduct a short analysis of his professional career, his rise to the position of America’s spymaster, his ability to influence both military and political leaders, and finally his vision of the OSS and Detachment 101.

From his youth, Donovan would cultivate relationships that he would capitalize upon throughout his public life, the first of which was future President Franklin Roosevelt. Donovan and Roosevelt first met at Columbia law school in 1904 and their relationship would eventually ensure Donovan’s ascendancy to control America’s clandestine enterprise.⁴¹ Following law school, as a veteran of the First World War, William Donovan gained celebrity as a Battalion Commander and as a Medal of Honor recipient in the famed 42nd Infantry Division under Douglas MacArthur. Donovan’s

⁴⁰ Richard Dunlop, *Donovan America’s Master Spy* (New York, NY: Rand McNally and Company, 1982), 204.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

tenuous relationship with Douglas MacArthur would continue throughout the interwar period and have tremendous consequences for the relationship between the OSS and the US Army in the Pacific Theater.⁴² Following the Great War, Donovan returned to law and made a name for himself as a Federal District Attorney in Buffalo during the tumultuous prohibition period, securing his appointment from President Warren Harding and solidifying his position within the Republican Party.⁴³ At one point, President Hoover had considered Donovan to serve as Attorney General for the United States or the Secretary of War.⁴⁴

Despite his active part in American political life, Colonel Donovan had what one senior US Government official noted as a hobby for war, adding that “[he was] not happy if there is a war on the face of the earth, and he has not had a look at it.”⁴⁵ Donovan continued to play a large role in veteran’s groups in the interwar period and was a leading member of anti-isolationist circles in the state of New York. After a failed attempt to run for the Governorship of New York, Donovan traveled around the world and observed the growing militarization of Europe and Asia; keeping himself abreast of what he viewed were growing threats to the United States. Donovan would later write that he visited other nations to gain a firsthand view of modern war and observed the capabilities of foreign intelligence organizations in direct contrast to the narrowly developed American

⁴² Ibid., 185.

⁴³ Ibid., 142-144.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 184.

intelligence apparatus.⁴⁶ During his numerous foreign travels, Donovan met personally with Adolf Hitler before his rise to power in Nazi Germany, Benito Mussolini during the early years of his dictatorship in Italy, and personally observed Japanese Army advances against Chinese forces in Manchuria.⁴⁷

Donovan sometimes found official sponsorship for his foreign missions and spoke both publically about his observations such as his address before the Army War College in 1938 and confidentially to President Roosevelt.⁴⁸ Through his own interest in world affairs and America's place in them, Donovan became the de-facto center of American intelligence, earning Roosevelt's admiration as his "secret legs." When Franklin Roosevelt delivered his famous Quarantine speech in September 1937 and consequently began to take actions that would move the United States further away from isolationist positions, Donovan broke from Republicans and spoke out in support of the Democratic President.⁴⁹ Two other Republicans who spoke out in support of the President were Frank Knox and Henry Stimson, the future Secretaries of the Navy and War, and it was Knox's recommendation to bring Donovan aboard as an advisor to the cabinet.⁵⁰ Donovan began to assume the role as Franklin Roosevelt's chief of espionage working closely with future Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and a veteran intelligence officer of the First

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 151, 187, 177.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 190-193.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 194.

⁵⁰ Edward Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II* (New York, NY: Richardson and Steirman, 1986), 28.

World War, Allen Dulles, to create a modern intelligence organization in preparation for the inevitable war against Japan and Germany.⁵¹

On his first official duty on behalf of President Roosevelt, Donovan traveled to the United Kingdom where he would personally observe and report on British capabilities after the recent initiation of hostilities between the Axis and the Allies. After personally meeting King George VI, Winston Churchill, and other key British government representatives, Donovan obtained nearly unrestricted access to observe Britain's military command structure based in underground London as well as the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE).⁵² No other event had as much influence on Donovan's ideas for the OSS as his observation of the British intelligence officers and special operations personnel. The British had mastered their intelligence craft from decades of governing a vast empire of varied peoples and geographies, and Donovan was the first non-Briton to have had introduction to the inner workings of the Secret Intelligence Service.⁵³ Donovan observed the British approaches to psychological warfare, economic warfare, industrial intelligence, and finally Special Operations (SO). Donovan received personal approval from Air Commodore Sir Frank Nelson, the Chief of SOE to travel across SOE stations to observe practices and activities.⁵⁴ Observing the SOE, Donovan visualized future American Special Operations

⁵¹ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 203.

⁵² Ibid., 209-212.

⁵³ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 31.

⁵⁴ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 212.

occurring in three stages: infiltration and preparation, sabotage and subversion, and finally direct support to guerrilla or commando units.⁵⁵

From Donovan's point of view, this trip gave shape to the organization he hoped to build for the United States and a sense of direction to the extracurricular espionage activities that he had dabbled in throughout the 1930s.⁵⁶ One observer later noted that Donovan's visit to England resulted in long standing personal ties between Donovan and British leaders, and that Donovan directly modeled the OSS after the British SOE.⁵⁷ This enduring relationship would directly affect Detachment 101 when British intelligence would loan numerous officers to serve in the American Special Operations unit at the outset of the Burma Campaign. Donovan returned to Washington and presented his frank recommendation to the President, that America required an intelligence organization of the same capacity as the British with an additional ability to conduct psychological warfare, sabotage, and subversion.⁵⁸ Donovan's opinion was that US Army Military Intelligence, the Office of Naval Intelligence, the FBI, and the State Department were not equal to the task and America's intelligence capacity was at best disorganized and incomplete. Major General George Strong, the Army G-2 fervently opposed the creation of a centralized intelligence agency and his personal rancor with Donovan translated to unrelenting organizational friction between the OSS and Army intelligence across the

⁵⁵ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 14.

⁵⁶ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 31.

⁵⁷ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 213.

⁵⁸ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 40.

globe.⁵⁹ Despite resistance from the aforementioned organizations and other politicians who argued that a spy agency and the conduct of such ungentlemanly warfare was un-American, Roosevelt cast his vote in support of Bill Donovan.

On July 11, 1941 Roosevelt announced the creation of the Coordinator of Information (COI) with the directive to “collect and analyze all information and data which may bear upon national security, to correlate such information and data, and make the same available to the President and such departments and officials of the Government as the President may determine, and to carry out when requested by the President such supplementary activities as may facilitate the securing of information important for national security and not now available to the Government.”⁶⁰

After the establishment of the COI, Donovan focused his newly formed organization to the tasks of Research and Analysis and Foreign Information Services.⁶¹ These rudimentary functions equate to a modern day intelligence collection and dissemination section as well as an information operations section to counter Axis propaganda. The political limitations that prevented Donovan from further refining the COI to his long-term goals soon collapsed in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. With a growing but reluctant level of support, Donovan oversaw a rapidly expanding COI that continued to receive new requirements from Washington but lacked the formal structure to achieve the actions required of it. Donovan also began visualizing

⁵⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁶¹ Ibid., 44.

a new role for the COI, one that he had viewed first hand from the British SOE, special operations.

Donovan undertook several efforts to execute a special operations program to compliment the ongoing counter-propaganda and intelligence collection efforts through unconventional warfare, subversion and sabotage. For Donovan, modern warfare would occur in three preparatory phases of secret operations before either a hostile power capitulated due to attrition or decisive conventional warfare began. These three phases of secret warfare included: secret intelligence to infiltrate the enemy and identify indigenous partisans, subversion and sabotage to prepare the area for large-scale partisan warfare, and finally guerrilla warfare and commando operations to destroy strategic targets.⁶²

In the summer of 1941 just several months prior to Pearl Harbor, Donovan invited his old friend Colonel Millard Preston Goodfellow to serve as one of two deputy directors for special activities at COI. Donovan designated Goodfellow's section as Special Activities-Goodfellow and tasked him to oversee and develop clandestine warfare and sabotage actions.⁶³ In late 1941, Goodfellow and his Secret Intelligence counterpart David Bruce visited a British SIS training camp near Toronto and immediately reported to Donovan for potential COI operations.⁶⁴ One of Donovan's first efforts to employ special operations involved a late 1941 proposition to employ American soldier of fortune, Charlie Sweeny, to travel into Vichy occupied North Africa and organize

⁶² Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 326.

⁶³ Ibid., 312.

⁶⁴ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 47.

indigenous Arabs in a guerrilla warfare campaign.⁶⁵ The State Department opposed this operation but Donovan was undeterred. Donovan drafted a formal proposal to Roosevelt that the United States organize a “guerrilla corps, independent and separate from the Army and Navy, and imbued with a maximum of the offensive and imaginative spirit.”⁶⁶ These efforts met profound resistance within the senior levels of the military in particular General Strong, who believed that guerrilla warfare wasted time and resources.⁶⁷

Continuing to develop ideas and concepts for Special Operations, Goodfellow’s section produced a concept of operations called OLIVIA on January 27, 1942. The concept for OLIVIA lacked specific locations but outlined American operatives conducting sabotage operations against “enemy establishments, public utilities, and high Axis commanders in the occupied areas.”⁶⁸ Donovan liked the ideas outlined in OLIVIA and suggested potential clandestine operations that could either organize Mongol guerrillas against the Japanese, organize revolts in Manchukuo (Manchuria) and Korea, or operate guerrilla bands in China.⁶⁹ However, Donovan would face one last political battle before his initial foray into special warfare could take shape.

While the conflict in Europe would eventually come to dominate the clandestine efforts of the OSS, the fledgling COI like the rest of the United States initially looked to

⁶⁵ Ibid., 55-56.

⁶⁶ Alfred Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare Its Origins* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1982), 26.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 15.

⁶⁹ Dunlop, *Donovan America’s Master Spy*, 339.

counter Japanese advances across the Pacific. Inter-service rivalries between the Army and the Navy resulted in a split command structure between Douglas MacArthur and Chester Nimitz as well as competing intelligence actions by US Army G2 and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI). Washington recommended that MacArthur employ Donovan's organization to collect intelligence against the Japanese in the Philippines.⁷⁰ MacArthur refused to allow the COI and later the OSS to operate in his theater. MacArthur's rocky relationship with Donovan and his distrust of the COI's civilian nature resulted in the establishment of his own intelligence collection force, the Allied Intelligence Bureau.⁷¹ Furthermore, MacArthur felt that an autonomous unit with a separate chain of command would usurp his authority as well as that his military expertise was more than sufficient to conduct special operations without OSS interference.⁷² Consequently, MacArthur rejected Donovan's offer for special operations support for American troops already conducting a guerrilla campaign in the Philippines under the command of Russell Volckman.⁷³ The ONI also resisted COI efforts to operate in the Pacific and created their own clandestine intelligence forces.⁷⁴ Preston Goodfellow

⁷⁰ William B. Breuer, *MacArthur's Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerrillas, and Secret Missions* (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 33.

⁷¹ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 85.

⁷² David Hogan, "MacArthur, Stillwell, and Special Operations in the War Against Japan, *Parameters* (Spring 1995): 106.

⁷³ Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare Its Origins*, 32-33.

⁷⁴ Hymoff, *the OSS in World War II*, 85-86.

would later comment that Donovan “had gotten a cold shoulder from the military services” and “not a single project had been approved.”⁷⁵

Despite the COI’s bleak perspective for participation in America’s counter strike against Japan, Goodfellow identified a potential location to test OLIVIA and validate Donovan’s vision of clandestine warfare. In mid-January 1942 Japanese forces, fresh from success in Hong Kong and Singapore initiated an attack into Burma and quickly routed the British.⁷⁶ Concurrently, the appointment of Joseph Stillwell to serve as Chiang Kai-shek’s Chief of Staff of Allied Forces inspired Goodfellow to prepare a detailed staff estimate on the potential for intelligence operations and irregular warfare in Burma.⁷⁷ General Stillwell had already accepted the grim reality that the CBI was low on Washington’s priority list and he could accomplish little with the overstretched Chinese forces. Stillwell liked the ideas outlined in OLIVIA and approved the operation with only one stipulation that the COI place CPT Carl Eifler, Stillwell’s by name request, in charge of the operation.⁷⁸ On April 22, 1942, the COI activated Detachment 101 with an area of responsibility ranging from China, Korea, Burma, Indo-China, the Malay States and Japan.⁷⁹ While Eifler assembled his men and underwent initial training, Stillwell and his staff were withdrawing from Burma on foot, narrowly escaping Japanese capture. Just

⁷⁵ Dunlop, *Donovan America’s Master Spy*, 346.

⁷⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 8-9.

⁷⁷ Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally and Company, 1979), 65.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66-69.

⁷⁹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 6.

two weeks before the men of Detachment 101 arrived in the CBI, COI transitioned to the Office of Strategic Services on June 13, 1942 as a component to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁸⁰ Donovan had achieved his goal of a national intelligence agency and created a paramilitary force ready to conduct irregular warfare. Detachment 101 would arrive in country with an overwhelming sense of urgency both institutionally from Donovan's pressure to demonstrate the potential of the OSS and operationally from Stillwell's desperation to check an unstoppable Japanese assault. The success of this detachment and the unique form of warfare that it advocated however, were still very much in doubt.

The OSS Organizational Structure and its Impact on Detachment 101

Detachment 101 began with a mere twenty-one personnel pulled from across the armed services and the COI. With limited guidance from OSS HQ to establish a clandestine warfare capacity as rapidly as possible, Eifler had an unprecedented level of freedom to organize his force. However, as the OSS expanded its operational capabilities and improved its organizational structure, the various OSS branches would play an important role in the evolutionary development of Detachment 101. These various branches would come to influence Detachment 101 either through formal means from Washington or through the subtle infusion of new personnel and ideas from various branches. Understanding the COI and the OSS in terms of organizational structure and doctrinal concepts will provide a comparative starting point for the development of Detachment 101 in Burma.

⁸⁰ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 392.

Detachment 101 existed for a mere two months before the activation of the OSS, however, the COI's basic structure and operating concepts had a tremendous impact on Carl Eifler's initial designs for the unit. Compared to the well-developed structure of the OSS that supported the entire US Government with intelligence and a range of special operations capabilities, COI was essentially a small peacetime office designed to support Donovan's personal intelligence initiatives for President Roosevelt. Consequently, personnel shortages and legal restrictions prevented the growth of this interim agency. As previously mentioned, Donovan utilized David Bruce and Preston Goodfellow to serve as the Deputy Directors to oversee the two primary functions of the COI, intelligence and irregular warfare. Since all activities fell within one of these two sections, Detachment 101 initially organized itself in a manner without compartmented branches. Indeed, Eifler's initial guidance for Detachment 101 was the establishment of two sections, an agent training section and an operations section, each for the purpose of collecting intelligence against the enemy and conducting acts of sabotage.⁸¹

It is important to note that majority of Detachment 101's assigned personnel originated from Special Activities-Goodfellow soon to be designated as the Special Operations (SO) Branch of the OSS and due to personnel shortages, SO personnel conducted numerous duties outside the purview of their specialized training.⁸² From inception, each man in Detachment 101 focused on the most important tasks required at the time regardless of branch or specialization. As time progressed this attitude spread throughout the detachment as a formalized policy, which OSS HQs regularly recognized

⁸¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 17.

⁸² Ibid., 18.

as a habitual indifference to branch distinctions.⁸³ Furthermore, the OSS Schools and Training Branch would later designate Detachment 101 as the exemplar for “inter-Branch cooperation and united Branch operations in the direction of a common goal.”⁸⁴

After the activation of the OSS, Donovan kept the Special Activities-Bruce and Special Activities- Goodfellow organizational model of the COI in the form of two directorates, intelligence services and strategic services operations.⁸⁵ However, where as in the COI all activities fell loosely into one of these directorates, the OSS established distinct branches within each of these directorates to conduct specific activities in a compartmentalized manner. Within the intelligence services directorate the secret intelligence (SI), counter-intelligence (X-2), and research and analysis (R&A) branches would find integration into Detachment 101. The strategic services operations directorate, also referred to as secret operations, provided the following branches to Detachment 101: special operations (SO), operational groups (OG), morale operations (MO), and maritime unit (MU). Independent branches such as research and development (R&D), communications, schools and training (S&T), and the field photographic section would also provide operatives for service in Burma.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions* (LaCrosse, WI: Brookhaven Press, 2004), 27.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

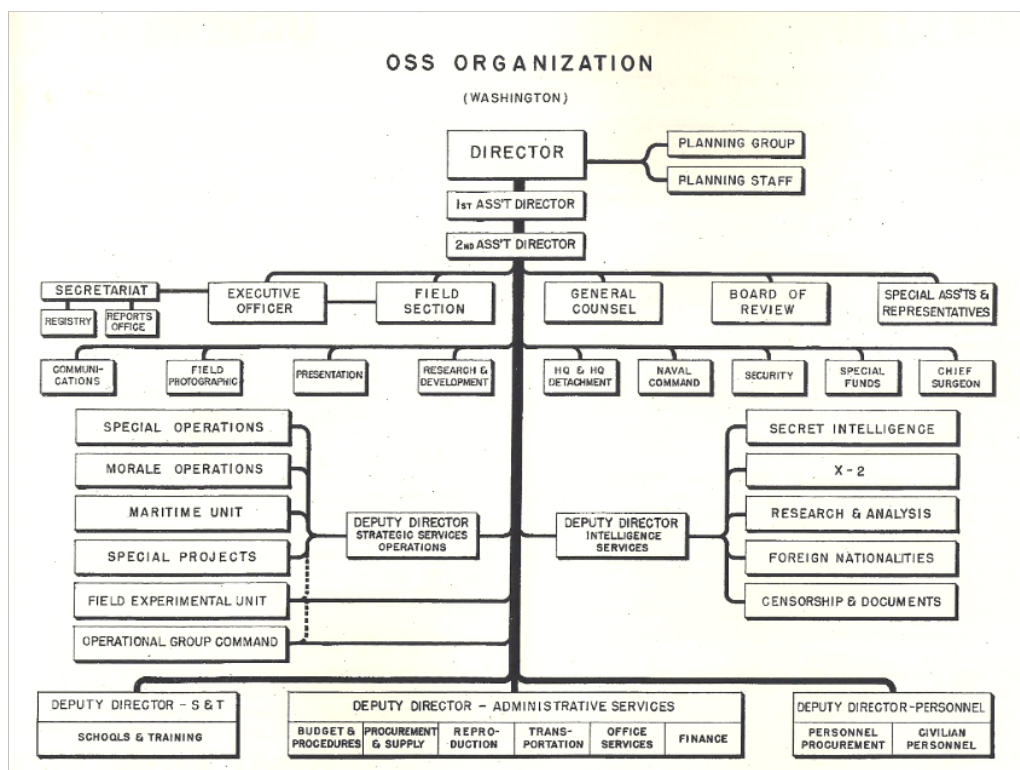


Figure 1. OSS Organization

Source: Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions* (LaCrosse, WI, Brookhaven Press, 2004), 5.

The SI was a primarily civilian influenced branch, which conducted espionage and spy craft throughout the world to obtain clandestine intelligence. SI executed its missions through the recruitment of agents and chains of intelligence across neutral and hostile territories.⁸⁶ SI representation within Detachment 101 although important was inconsistent throughout the Second World War. The high ratio of military to civilian

⁸⁶ Ibid., 6.

personnel in Detachment 101 as well as the continued influence of the SO branch led to points of friction with SI officers.⁸⁷

The R&A was one of the oldest branches of the OSS, based upon what were the few authorized actions of the COI during peacetime. Consolidating raw information from SI reports and other OSS branches, R&A analyzed, correlated, and interpreted information into finished intelligence products for the military and the president.⁸⁸ However, despite the longevity of R&A in the COI and the OSS, Detachment 101 did not receive any personnel from this branch until January 1944.⁸⁹

The shadowy and abrasive X-2 branch conducted counterespionage activities both internally to the OSS and in support of the US Army's Counterintelligence Corps (CIC).⁹⁰ Generally, X-2 operated with little integration into other branches to ensure compartmentalization and operational security. Likewise, in CBI, X-2 operated outside the direct command of Detachment 101 for an extended period and worked with the CIC at General Stillwell's headquarters.⁹¹ This separation resulted in a contentious relationship with Detachment 101 until the Myitkyina Campaign when X-2 permanently embedded operatives in the detachment.

⁸⁷ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 136-137.

⁸⁸ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 13.

⁸⁹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 87.

⁹⁰ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 13.

⁹¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 155-156.

Special Operations (SO) branch organized sabotage operations behind enemy lines and furnished support agents for guerrilla forces. SO operated in small teams, often without uniforms, to conduct special reconnaissance, direct action, or support partisans.⁹² OSS doctrine would later codify SO's core activities as sabotage, direct contact with and support for underground resistance, and other special operations support including intelligence collection, guerrilla action, and morale operations (psychological operations).⁹³ SO branch composed a majority of the Detachment 101's initial personnel and certainly had the immediate influence upon the organization. Since Detachment 101 began as a SO project, initial actions in Burma reflected the branch's core activities through Eifler's intention to conduct primarily unilateral sabotage behind enemy lines. However, as time progressed SO personnel began to undertake actions outside these initial mission sets. The willingness of operatives to execute actions beyond those outlined in their initial training likely followed from the emphasis on independence and resourcefulness in SO training, the breadth of missions outlined in SO doctrine, and the traditions of an overarching Special Activities-Goodfellow directorate.

Closely related to SO but distinctly separate were Operational Groups (OG). OG served first as the "operational nuclei of guerrilla organizations" that emerged from resistance groups and second, as direct-action force to conduct unilateral action against

⁹² Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 13-14.

⁹³ Office of Strategic Services, *Special Operations Field Manual Strategic Services*, 12-15.

enemy targets.⁹⁴ Unlike the small team nature of SO branch, OG operated in larger groups composed of fifteen to twenty man detachments and always in uniform.⁹⁵ According to OSS doctrine, OG branch trained, organized, and equipped resistance groups to operate as guerrilla elements against enemy forces in the field where as SO branch organized guerrillas and resistance groups for attritional sabotage or special purpose strikes.⁹⁶ However, Detachment 101 leadership refused to accept such distinctions and integrated SO and OG personnel into the conduct of guerrilla warfare and sabotage actions.

Morale Operations executed black propaganda, distinctly separate from the public affairs announcements of the Office of Wartime Information (OWI) branch. The intent for such propaganda operations was the “morale subversion against the enemy in support of military operations.”⁹⁷ MO was one of the original branches to provide operatives to Detachment 101 but the overwhelming focus of MO Branch headquarters in Washington directed resources against the European Theater and with limited expertise, Detachment 101 performed poorly in MO with a few notable exceptions.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 20.

⁹⁵ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 387-388.

⁹⁶ Office of Strategic Services, *Operational Groups Field Manual, Strategic Services (Provisional)* (1944), 14.

⁹⁷ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 22.

⁹⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 154.

As Detachment 101 continued to expand its operational area the demand for specialized branches such as MU, R&D, and S&T increased. MU unlike other branches lacked general functions and instead had specific training, equipment, and mission sets depending on the theater of war. In Burma and the rest of South East Asia MU provided clandestine water infiltration through the thick mangrove swamps along the Burmese coast as well as scout swimmers for maritime reconnaissance.⁹⁹ R&D would come provide support for Detachment 101 as a whole by developing adaptive cover support for indigenous agents and jungle peculiar modifications to enhance combat equipment in Burma's harsh terrain. S&T maintained numerous jungle warfare and agent training schools that produced nearly a division's worth of guerrillas.

The Kachins

When the first Americans from Detachment 101 arrived in Burma, they found a culture and terrain unlike any they had ever experienced. Although the assigned OSS personnel knew they would work with indigenous peoples, few of these Americans understood Asian culture or the realities of life in a jungle environment. Furthermore, unlike later OSS operations in Europe that benefited from shared religious, ethnic, and cultural connections with indigenous partners, Detachment 101 lacked the cultural knowledge to initially establish or support a local resistance movement. In the spring of 1942, Eifler's plans lacked any understanding of the human terrain in Burma, but as Detachment 101 matured and guerrilla warfare became the unit's primary operational approach, one particular ethnic group became the heart of the resistance, the Kachins.

⁹⁹ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 27.

Eventually, this group would become so integral to operations that the unofficial unit title “Kachin Rangers” would become synonymous with Detachment 101 throughout CBI.

Since a majority of Detachment 101’s actions were conducted by, with, and through the Kachins, also known as Jinghpaws, a basic understanding of this ethnic group is critical to understanding OSS operations in Burma. The Kachins taught their American counterparts how to survive and thrive in the jungle; providing Detachment 101 with a mastery of the Burmese landscape that the Japanese could never accomplish despite their world renown reputation in jungle warfare. As Detachment 101 evolved, Eifler and later Raymond Peers would modify doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, and facilities to accommodate the Kachin people.

Burma in the 1940s was an “ethnic archipelago” composed of varied peoples each with their own distinctive languages, religions, and cultural traditions.¹⁰⁰ The largest ethnic group was the Burmese who occupied the central lowland plain including the capital of Rangoon. British estimates in 1941 placed the Burmese population at 13 million, with the second highest ethnic group at 1 million.¹⁰¹ Further north from the central plain were the hill peoples that included such groups as the Nagas, Palaungs, Chins, Kachins, and the Shans. Population estimates for these people were 50,000 Chins, 150,000 Kachins, and 1 million Shans.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Selth, “Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 484.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 485.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

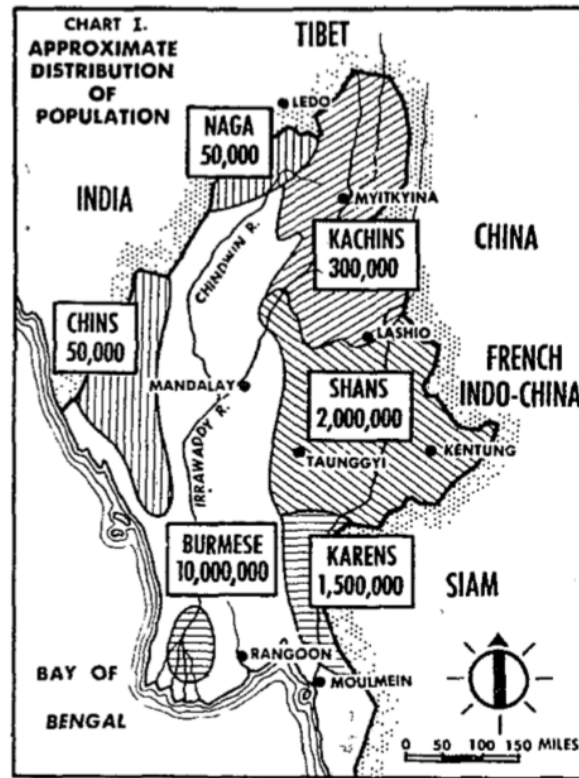


Figure 2. Ethnic Distribution in 1940s Burma

Source: William Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," *Military Review* (June 1948): 11.

Although these smaller people were often in conflict with each other, the collective majority held deep animosity against the dominant Burmese population dating back centuries. Prior to British colonization, the Burmese Kingdom treated these minorities as backward savages and exploited them. Capitalizing on this separation, the British recruited the Karens, Kachins, and Chins to support their efforts to overthrow the Burmese monarchy.¹⁰³ After the British established control over the area as component territory of India, missionaries traveled into the mountainous north and converted

¹⁰³ Selth, "Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945," 487-488.

numerous peoples to Christianity.¹⁰⁴ The hill peoples, including the Kachins were mostly animists and those who did not convert to Christianity maintained strong relations with the European evangelists. The Kachin connection to Christianity would later aid the British SOE and Detachment 101 in establishing immediate rapport with local tribes. The religious divide between the Buddhist Burmese would only increase as more and more Kachins adopted Christianity.

Due to their mistrust of the Burmese and a desire to keep the ethnic majority in check, the British would only recruit Chins, Karens, and Kachins into the Indian Army.¹⁰⁵ Not only did this decision continue to cultivate the warfighting skills of an already martial people, this consolidation of military power further fed into the incredible animosity between the deposed Burmese the mountainous Kachins. Despite their fiercely independent nature, the Kachins and many other hill tribes preferred British rule because of the self-autonomy they provided as well as their continued marginalization of the Burmese.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, at the outbreak of the Japanese invasion many Kachins were already in the service of the British military and more than willing to fight against the Japanese and their Burmese sympathizers.

In addition to the trained soldiers already serving in the ranks of the British Empire, the Kachin people's expertise in field craft and raiding skills provided unlimited potential for future military resistance. In 1941, the SOE in London preemptively dispatched special operations teams to organize Kachin and Karin resistance agents in the

¹⁰⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Selth, "Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945," 488-489.

¹⁰⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 7.

event of a Japanese invasion in Burma. SOE operatives recruited over 2000 Karen and Kachin tribesmen with expressed orders to go underground and await further instructions from their British handlers.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, a year later when British resistance collapsed in the face of Japanese aggression, a large contingent of Kachin soldiers and clandestine Kachin agents melted into the northern mountains, establishing the core element for Detachment 101's future guerrilla force.

¹⁰⁷ Selth, "Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945," 496-497.

CHAPTER 3
BROKEN EGGS, DETACHMENT 101 HARD LESSONS
FROM 1942 AND 1943

Booms in the Jungle-Detachment 101
Recruiting, Training, and Arrival

In the early winter months of 1942, adjacent to the National Mall's reflecting pool in an area now occupied by the serene Constitution Gardens stood America's joint military headquarters, the Munitions Building. In these cramped offices a world away from the Asian jungles that fell before the Japanese scythe, Preston Goodfellow knocked on the door to Joseph Stillwell's office.¹⁰⁸ Goodfellow had come to ask the rancorous general why he had disapproved the COI's formal request to operate in theater, despite his initial support for OLIVIA. Stillwell replied that he had disapproved of the COI's choice for a commanding officer of Detachment 101. Cognizant of a fleeting opportunity for the COI, Goodfellow informed Stillwell he was amenable to recommendations for a suitable man to command the unit. Stillwell scribbled down two names and told Preston, "get either of these two men and your project has my approval."¹⁰⁹ One of the names of the list was dead before Goodfellow could ever contact him; the other was Carl Eifler.

Eifler's connection with Stillwell began in 1934 when he was a reserve officer assigned to Stillwell's command along the Mexican border. At the time, Eifler was also serving as a Treasury Department Customs agent where he made a name for himself

¹⁰⁸ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 68.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

infiltrating and breaking up smuggling rings along the California border.¹¹⁰ While conducting his duties as a federal agent, Eifler uncovered a Japanese military attempt build an airfield in Baja California, earning Stillwell's admiration.¹¹¹ Stillwell met Eifler again in Hawaii where he was still serving as a Customs agent and a reserve officer in Honolulu.¹¹² In the summer of 1941, Eifler came on active duty as the commanding officer for Kilo Company, 35th Infantry Regiment and within a few months, his unit found themselves under fire from the Japanese aerial bombardment at Pearl Harbor.¹¹³ Following Pearl Harbor, Eifler and Kilo Company participated in the internment of Japanese civilians on the Hawaiian Islands. The combination of Eifler's past actions in California as well as his performance in Hawaii made such a marketable impression on Joseph Stillwell that this junior officer stood out as one of the two men capable of conducting guerrilla warfare and sabotage behind Japanese lines in the CBI.

Raymond Peers, the second commander of Detachment 101, described Eifler as an imposing individual at a height of six foot two inches and two hundred and fifty pounds of solid muscle.¹¹⁴ Eifler's military training left him skilled in jujitsu and small unit infantry tactics, while his Custom's Officer experience, infiltrating hostile organizations demonstrated the requisite intelligence and street sense to successfully

¹¹⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 16.

¹¹¹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 69.

¹¹² William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 26.

¹¹³ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 70.

¹¹⁴ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 26.

conduct clandestine operations. Despite Stillwell's, seemingly impulsive selection for Carl Eifler to command Detachment 101, this young captain represented the model commando for America's new special operations enterprise. Donovan quickly took a liking to Eifler and provided him with a set of vague instructions and objectives that would serve as Eifler's only frame of reference in the initial months of 1942. Donovan instructed Eifler to conduct clandestine operations against the Japanese in Burma through the form of espionage, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, propaganda, and escape and evasion and furthermore, Eifler was to fight a form of warfare that knew no roles ranging from assassinations to blowing up bridges.¹¹⁵

Donovan and Goodfellow gave Eifler free reign to select any men he wanted throughout the US for his initiative with the only guidance that the number should be small to maintain a low signature. Time would only tell if Detachment 101 would warrant further personnel. Eifler informed Goodfellow that he sought men who were well versed in "military science and tactics, engineering, explosives, radio and other communications, basic medicine, precision machinery, and photography; and men who possessed a [Asian] language aptitude."¹¹⁶

Eifler's first recruiting efforts went close to home with men whom he had already fought with at Pearl Harbor and could vouch for their resolution under fire. Among these trusted individuals were Vincent Curl, his Kilo Company, 35th Infantry First Sergeant, Captain John Coughlin, Company Commander of Lima Company, 35th Infantry, Lieutenant Robert Aitken, a military intelligence officer in the US Army's Hawaiian

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Department, and Captain Archie Chun Ming, a US Army medical officer who spoke Mandarin.¹¹⁷ These core individuals had close relationships prior to their service in Detachment 101 and consequently, the unit cohesion and morale was unprecedented from the time of arrival in theater.

Armed with the full support of Donovan and the COI, Eifler traveled throughout the United States on a recruiting drive that included Fort Monmouth, Fort Benning, Fort Meade, and Fort Myer. Eifler expected his new recruits to “volunteer blindly” based on the potential activities of special operations but screened them for indications that they were glory seekers by advising them that they were signing their own death warrants.¹¹⁸ In addition to the requisite skill sets for to conduct clandestine operations in Asia, Coughlin and Eifler narrowed their search to include only junior officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians. Coughlin commented, “we theoretically had the choice of the best personnel in the United States but we were so junior in rank that we had to pick only junior officers or they would have outranked us.”¹¹⁹ Although this selection criterion fundamentally served the self-interests of junior officers like Eifler and Coughlin, the unintended consequence was the establishment of a unit that was quick to disassociate itself from the regimens of the conventional army and therefore free to improvise on the battlefield.

The most important recruit came from the recommendation of Captain Coughlin. Recalling an infantry officer of superior skill and fortitude from his lieutenantancy,

¹¹⁷ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 70-75.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Coughlin contacted Captain William Ray Peers who had just completed the Infantry Officer's Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia.¹²⁰ After a short interview with Eifler, Peers was reassigned to the COI and Detachment 101. Peers in many ways was the Ying to Eifler's Yang and the combination of these two men's leadership was a critical component to the development of Detachment 101 in Burma.

By the time that Eifler completed recruitment for his small contingent, Detachment 101 consisted of a composite grouping of infantry officers and NCOs, army and civilian engineers, radio technicians, military intelligence officers, a civilian watchmaker, a court stenographer, a Korean-American dissident, a former advisor to a Chinese warlord, and a US Customs officer with wiretapping expertise.¹²¹ Prior to departure for the Far East, these newly minted OSS operatives had to complete a basic qualification course to certify their capability to operate independently as well as provide the theoretical framework for the operations they were to undertake against the Japanese. Half of the detachment would attend Camp X, the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) training facility near Toronto, and the other half would attend B Camp, the COI's first training school located in what is now Camp David, Maryland.¹²²

Eifler and Coughlin were among the detachment's trainees at Camp X. Training included lock picking, safe blowing, second-story entry, explosives emplacement, incendiary devices, radios employment, listening devices, and cryptography.¹²³

¹²⁰ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 28.

¹²¹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 77-78.

¹²² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 19.

¹²³ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 81.

Additionally, the SOE program included physical fitness, parachute training, live fire exercises, and simulated interrogations by captured German officers.¹²⁴ Despite initial friction between the upstart Americans and their British instructors, the training had a lasting impact on the OSS operatives. Two particular points of training were instrumental in the organizational culture of Detachment 101 as well as its initial operational approach in CBI. First, British Commando instruction under the oversight of the legendary Major Don Fairbairn emphasized an idea of unrestricted warfare based on no rules and the willingness to use any method to win in combat. Fairbairn commuted between Camp X and B Camp, where he also trained Ray Peers and the remaining Detachment 101 members in close combat. Peers stated that “to him, there were no rules in staying alive . . . he taught us to enter a fight with one idea; kill an opponent quickly and efficiently.”¹²⁵ Training at both Camp X and B Camp resulted in an organizational culture of unrelenting tenacity and willingness to experiment with any method to achieve success. The second aspect of training which had a lasting impact on Detachment 101 was the culmination exercise, which included a long range infiltration through the Canadian forests to simulate the explosive sabotage of a rail line.¹²⁶ Peers executed a similar exercise at B Camp against a factory, and the collective understanding for the execution of basic sabotage missions served as the exact model for Detachment 101’s initial actions in Burma.

¹²⁴ John Chambers II, “Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II,” *Journal of the American Intelligence Professional* 54, no. 2 (June 2010): 2.

¹²⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 31.

¹²⁶ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 84.

Training for Peers and the other half of Detachment 101 at B Camp was similar in many ways to Camp X, but there were a few marketable differences that likely influenced the future organizational culture of the unit. Unlike Camp X where Officers and Enlisted completed two distinctly segregated training regimens, the American training course offered little acknowledgment of rank.¹²⁷ Instead, the COI instructors prohibited saluting and regularly placed enlisted men in leadership positions during exercises. Furthermore, B Camp consolidated the initial training of Secret Intelligence (SI) personnel as well as Special Operations (SO) personnel.¹²⁸ The result for the SO personnel destined for service in Detachment 101 was a basic understanding of the clandestine field craft necessary to conduct espionage as well as a universal willingness amongst SO personnel to engage in intelligence collection as well as paramilitary action.

After the completion of SO training, the men of Detachment 101 arrived in India at CBI HQs early June 1941. At every turn, regular army personnel attempted to task or absorb Eifler's men but provided little support for the mission. Stillwell was away from headquarters for a meeting with Chiang Kai-shek and until the commanding general issued his guidance, OSS operations were at a standstill. While Coughlin and Peers maintained a low profile in New Delhi, Eifler, freshly promoted to major, and Master Sergeant (MSG) Curl flew to Chungking, China and met face to face with General Stillwell.¹²⁹ Stillwell in his typically acerbic attitude initially chided the OSS presence as

¹²⁷ Chambers, "Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II," 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 107-108.

unnecessary but after a short period informed Eifler that he intended for Detachment 101 to focus their efforts in mainland China.¹³⁰

Stillwell may have initially intended to employ the OSS to support the CBI's main effort along the Chinese coast where a vast majority of the Japanese Army was engaged against the Chinese. However, three factors likely influenced Stillwell's final decision to direct Detachment 101 against Burma. First, Tai Li, Chiang Kai-shek's intelligence chief, was terribly paranoid of foreign designs and opposed the OSS presence in China just as they had opposed the British SOE and SIS presence.¹³¹ Secondly, British Allies under the command of Lord Mountbatten were deeply concerned about their ability to maintain access to the resources of the Indian subcontinent; consequently, they were eager for any American support to blunt the Japanese advance.¹³² Finally, from May 1942 to July 1942 Stillwell had submitted a series of proposals to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington that would transition him from the subordinate position of Chiang Kai-shek's chief of staff to the position of theater commander in chief. Stillwell had gained Marshall's approval to establish "US Army Forces in China, Burma, and India" with the specific operational objectives to retake Burma and reopen the lines of communication from Rangoon to Kunming.¹³³

¹³⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 21.

¹³¹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 108.

¹³² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 24.

¹³³ Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History United States Army, 1987), 5.

Stillwell verbally instructed Eifler that OSS Detachment 101 was to operate in Northern Burma and had ninety days to get intelligence and guerrilla operations under way behind Japanese lines.¹³⁴ Stillwell's parting words before Eifler left Chungking were "all I want to hear are booms from the Burma jungle."¹³⁵ After Eifler's return to New Deli, further refined guidance came in the form of a written order. Stillwell's priorities for Detachment 101 were to first establish a base camp in northeast India and from that position conduct operations to deny the Japanese the use of Myitkyina airport and the roads leading to it from the south; and finally closely coordinate operations with British XIV Corps to ensure effective unity of effort.¹³⁶

Eifler and his men analyzed potential locations for the establishment of the detachment's base of operations. However, the OSS lacked any formal doctrine for the development of a guerrilla base or any other component of the area complex necessary to support a resistance movement. Detachment 101 would have to rely upon on their limited experience from the classroom under the tutelage of British experts. The educational framework of guerrilla warfare based upon the British experience stressed several critical factors for success to OSS personnel assigned to SO, SI, and OG branches.¹³⁷ Among these requirements were the support of the population for the resistance, continuous intelligence collection networks, and a logistical support network that could support

¹³⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 109.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 42-43.

¹³⁷ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 108.

forces in hostile terrain.¹³⁸ This British lesson on the importance of guerrilla logistical support was the primary variable in Eifler's site selection criteria. Ray Peers recalled that the detachment was unanimous in its decision to establish a base as close to North Burma as possible based off the anticipated difficulties in supplying and communicating with guerillas in the field.¹³⁹

Just as Donovan had cultivated a strong relationship between the OSS and the SOE at the strategic level, Eifler built close relationships with his British counterparts in CBI. On June 20, 1942, Eifler met with Colin MacKenzie, SOE commander in India, in what was the start of a long and extremely close relationship between British special operations forces and Detachment 101.¹⁴⁰ In addition to basic agreements about de-conflicting operations and sharing intelligence, MacKenzie assigned Major Waly Richmond to Detachment 101 as a British SOE liaison officer. One of the first recommendations from the British SOE for Detachment 101 was the use of the Assam Tea Plantation in Nazira as a base of operations. Peers described Nazira as an ideal facility for Detachment 101 due to the proximity of jungles, rivers, and mountains for future training as well as the high number of English vetted plantation workers who would limit potential enemy penetrations of the facility.¹⁴¹

Operating from their new installation under the pseudonym of the "US Army Experimental Station" Eifler impressed upon his men the importance of immediate action

¹³⁸ Ibid., 108-114.

¹³⁹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 58.

¹⁴⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 24.

¹⁴¹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 59.

in Northern Burma. Eifler had a ninety-day deadline to achieve results and with pressure from both Stillwell and Donovan to conduct operations against the Japanese, he was resolute in his objective to have operational agents and direct action teams by the end of 1942.¹⁴² However, Detachment 101 immediately recognized that SO training prior to deployment was insufficient for the Asian environment they were to operate in. Peers described the numerous issues facing the detachment to include ignorance in the required ability to speak a particular dialect of language in the region as well as the need to understand the geography, sociology, and economy of the area.¹⁴³ These factors taken in conjunction with the difficulty of passing Caucasian Americans as locals forced Detachment 101 to set parameters for agents who were native to operational areas.

The British SOE once again came to the aide of Detachment 101, turning over fifteen agents in training to Eifler for use in Burma on October 8, 1942.¹⁴⁴ These first recruits in Detachment 101's "jungle school" completed programs of instruction modeled off the Detachment's experience at B Camp and Camp X. Training included radio operations, codes, signal plans, security, unarmed combat, weapons, demolitions, and jungle craft.¹⁴⁵ However, it did not take long for the Americans to realize that their indigenous agents had as much to teach the OSS operatives, as they had to learn.¹⁴⁶ The Americans spent hours asking their trainees about the countryside in Northern Burma as

¹⁴² Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 121.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 61.

well as the people who lived there. At the end of each day, cadre under the supervision of Peers spent all night revising the next day's training plan to include regional considerations and cultural lessons learned from the indigenous trainees.¹⁴⁷ Peers had created a constant feedback and improvement loop for the Detachment's jungle school.

While Peers oversaw the training of the detachments first agents, designated as A Group, and prepared these men for the first OSS operations of the Second World War, communications shortcomings threatened to prevent operations from ever taking place. The OSS lacked any radio system that could communicate to dispersed guerrilla elements and SO personnel across the Northern Burma countryside. Distances between Nazira and Detachment 101's area of operations varied between two hundred and fifty to five hundred miles. The long range radios of the time were far too heavy and cumbersome for dismounted troops to carry in the mountainous jungles. Recognizing the importance of communications during his recruitment process, Eifler had sought out several radio technicians with the highest credentials in both the military and the government. Detachment operatives Phil Huston, Allen Richter, Don Eng, and Fima Haimson set out to build a radio system that could cover the required distance but weighed no more than fifty pounds including the power source.¹⁴⁸ Utilizing surplus army radios from the Lend Lease Act as well as field expedient components purchased from the local market, these men built a rudimentary high frequency radio system weighing less than forty pounds and able of long distance communications across the region.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 28-29.

The development of the Detachment 101's field radio systems as well as the evolutionary nature of the jungle school demonstrated the innovative and self-reliant nature of the unit's personnel. The lack of guerrilla warfare doctrine as well as limited operational resources forced Detachment 101 to improvise solutions as they conducted their operations. The leadership of Eifler and Peers enabled this improvisation by actively encouraging personnel to try any technique where none yet existed. Constant feedback and analysis of lessons learned reinforced success and discontinued failure. Detachment 101's ability to reflect in action enabled the rapid establishment of a base of operations and combat ready indigenous direct action teams. The hallmark ability of Detachment 101 to improvise with anything that worked would set the tone for the duration of the unit's efforts in Burma.

Long Range Penetration Special Operations

Eifler had a core contingent of operational agents as well as a viable means to communicate with his personnel across the vast expanses of the Burmese countryside. As Peers continued to produce agents at the Jungle School, Eifler felt the pressure from both Donovan and Stillwell to execute operations. Recruiting for potential agents continued at a rapid pace, focusing on locals who knew Burmese customs but also had a rudimentary knowledge of the English language.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, Detachment 101 recruited heavily from local refugee camps and the core ethnicities of the initial agents were Burmese or Indians.¹⁵¹ These men were competent and highly motivated to fight, however, most were

¹⁵⁰ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 102.

¹⁵¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 27.

equally foreign to the northern mountains of Burma where the Detachment would conduct its initial operations against Myitkyina Airfield.

Hoping to achieve rapid success and impress Stillwell, Eifler directed that sabotage, intelligence collection, and agent network development were the initial focus for operations.¹⁵² At the time, the capabilities of the Kachin and Karen hill tribes were unknown to detachment personnel, and Eifler determined that small team penetrations into hostile territory could achieve his aforementioned objectives. Several factors may have likely influenced Eifler's decision to conduct what at the time was referred to as "penetration operations," or the conduct of a special reconnaissance missions with follow on direct action employing sabotage and special purpose munitions. First, SO training at Camp X and B Camp utilized a penetration operation as the culmination exercise and consequently, the de facto standard for operations impressed upon every operative in the detachment. At the outset of the campaign with no other ideas for the doctrinal employment of Special Operations, Detachment 101 defaulted to what it had been trained to do. Secondly, Eifler had a wealth of experience infiltrating across the border from his time as a Customs Agent in California, and he wanted to employ some of techniques he observed from Mexican bandits to infiltrate agents and material into enemy controlled territory.¹⁵³ Finally, the British connection between the SOE and the OSS likely influenced Eifler to conduct penetration operations due to Major General Orde Wingate's

¹⁵² Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 103.

¹⁵³ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 30.

employment of the technique with his Chindits, another early British SOF unit, to destroy Japanese bridges deep within Burmese territory.¹⁵⁴

Over the course of 1943, Detachment 101 conducted numerous recorded and unrecorded penetration operations. These operations occurred in two distinct forms, long range penetrations and short range penetration operations. Long range penetrations employed airborne or maritime insertion methods to place commonwealth agents, specifically screened with British SOE support, hundreds of miles into Japanese territory.¹⁵⁵ Short range operations were conducted from advanced operating bases by conducting dismounted infiltration for shallow penetrations into enemy territory for limited objectives. Eifler placed the majority of the detachment's effort on long range penetrations and they were enormously costly to execute. As such, over the course of 1943 the detachment conducted only six long range penetrations. Short range operations were conducted concurrently with the larger operations and were far more frequent. Despite the similarity of their titles, the differences between long range operations and short ranger operations were innumerable. In order to examine the differing impacts that these operations had upon the organizational development of Detachment 101 this study will analyze these actions separately.

Detachment 101's first action and its first long range penetration operation occurred in February of 1943. Failed attempts to infiltrate A Group into Burma at the close of 1942 forced Eifler to use a prescient mission narrative to convince CBI Air Transport Command to provide parachutes and airlift support to Detachment 101.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 32.

Support for the clandestine unit's parachute insertions would enable the OSS to contact Kachin natives in Burma and establish a personnel recovery network to help downed airmen return to friendly control.¹⁵⁶

Long range penetrations were exactly the type of operation envisioned by OSS SO Branch to conduct specialized infiltration into hostile territory and employ agents to conduct sabotage against the enemy's critical points.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, SO branch envisioned such sabotage operations as *coup de main* acts that generated unparalleled disruption for the enemy compared to the saboteur's relatively minor effort.¹⁵⁸ Since Eifler's OSS training focused on the accomplishment of high payoff actions and Stillwell continuously demanded immediate results, long range penetrations preoccupied Eifler's attention throughout 1943.

A Group's mission would be to cut rail lines and blow bridges south of Myitkyina city in order to disrupt the resupply of the Japanese fighters at the airfield; enabling the US and Great Britain to resupply Chinese forces through uninhibited passage over the "hump" airlift route.¹⁵⁹ As mentioned most of A Group were agent turnovers from British SOE and had extensive military training prior to their work for the OSS. The commanding officer for A Group was Captain Jack Barnard, an Anglo-Burmese officer whom the SOE had recruited from the British Burmese Regiment and transferred to the

¹⁵⁶ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 103-104.

¹⁵⁷ Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Office of Strategic Services, *Simple Sabotage Field Manual, Strategic Services (Provisional)* (Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 1944), 1.

¹⁵⁹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 33.

OSS.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, four Kachins were team members of A Group and their presence would prove fortuitous for both the mission and the whole of Detachment 101.¹⁶¹

The OSS estimates regarding the capabilities of Japanese air strength in northern Burma depicted a highly capable enemy air threat originating out of Myitkyina airfield. Consequently, the detachment leadership determined to employ the C-87 aircraft, a cargo conversion of the B-24 bomber, as the primary aircraft from which to conduct parachute insertions due to its self-defense capacity through an assortment of .50 caliber machine guns.¹⁶² Unfortunately, the C-87 was not designed for parachute drops and had no suitable troop doors or static line cables. This did not deter the ever-innovative OSS operatives who under the oversight of veteran Jumpmaster Master Sergeant Wayne Milligan installed make shift cables in the aircraft in preparation for the Detachment's first combat jump.¹⁶³

On February 7, 1943 after two days of aerial reconnaissance, Eifler and Coughlin served as jumpmasters to insert Group A's pathfinder element. The pathfinder insertion appeared to proceed without difficulty until the pathfinders failed to report the security of the drop zone back to headquarters. The loss of communication left the remaining agents on the team and Detachment 101's operations officers locked in hours of hypothetical debate as whether to proceed with or abort the mission.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the agents of

¹⁶⁰ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 122.

¹⁶¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 33.

¹⁶² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 71.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 153.

Group A remained undeterred and were confident that the operation would be successful. Eifler determined to insert the remaining agents providing the proper panels were displayed on the drop zone.¹⁶⁵ The following day, the C-87s with P-40 fighter escorts inserted the remaining elements of Group A via parachute into Northern Burma's Koukkwee Valley.¹⁶⁶

Following a textbook insertion, the twelve man Group A moved fifty miles from the drop zone by foot and spent several days conducting local reconnaissance patrols before establishing a mission support site (MSS). The MSS maintained HF radio communications with Detachment 101 headquarters in Nazira, while two man teams from the group emplaced explosives along the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway and other bridges in the area.¹⁶⁷ The agents utilized delayed fuses to ensure that each team would have ample time to exfiltrate from the objective area before the explosives detonated. The operation appeared to be progressing without issue until one of the teams encountered a Japanese patrol while emplacing explosives on the Namkwin Bridge. Braving enemy small arms fire, the agents completed the explosives emplacement and prematurely blew the bridge before moving into escape and evasion.¹⁶⁸

Two A Group agents, Pat Quinn and B. V. Aganoor were now in a sustained engagement while attempting to break contact from their Japanese pursuers. Aganoor recognized that the two men had little chance of surviving a sustained evasion with the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 154.

¹⁶⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 75.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 83-84.

¹⁶⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 35.

Japanese so close on their trail and he elected to remain in a hasty fighting position to delay the enemy for Quinn's escape.¹⁶⁹ The Japanese eventually surrounded and killed Aganoor, the Detachment's first casualty of the war, but his heroism enabled Pat Quinn to withdraw north towards the predetermined rendezvous point (RV).¹⁷⁰

The premature explosions and the subsequent gunfire were clear indicators to the remaining element of A Group that their clandestine action was compromised. In addition to Quinn's team, which had already lost a man, two other direct action teams were moving into escape and evasion from their target areas. One of these teams under Captain Barnard, the A Group Commander, returned to the MSS to link up with the radio communications section and the four Kachin agents providing local security.¹⁷¹ From the MSS, they moved forty miles north to the pre-established RV point to await the other direct action teams.¹⁷² However, Quinn's team or Red Maddox's team failed to arrive within the time window. Consequently, Barnard cached the remaining explosives and food before proceeding north on a 150 mile movement to Fort Hertz, the last remaining British military outpost in northern Burma.¹⁷³ Just one day after Barnard's departure from the RV point, Red Maddox and his team arrived awaiting any other members of A Group. Only Quinn arrived, and the three men assuming the worst continued north towards Fort Hertz.

¹⁶⁹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 159-160.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 36.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

While Maddox, Quinn, and Dennis Francis continued north towards Fort Hertz without any food or resupply, Barnard was still in possession of the Group's HF radio. Consequently, Captain Barnard was able to communicate with Detachment 101 Headquarters for aerial resupply drops and communicate the Group's intent to move towards Fort Hertz.¹⁷⁴ As a majority of Group A moved north, the value of the Kachin agents become apparent to every team member as well as Eifler and Peers at Headquarters. The Kachins possessed an uncanny ability to move through the mountainous jungle terrain as well as identify potential ambush sites. Furthermore, the Kachin agents achieved instantaneous rapport in local villages along the evasion route thereby providing immediate situational awareness regarding Japanese patrols in the area and their attempts to locate A Group.¹⁷⁵

Barnard's ability to communicate with Detachment 101 headquarters, continuous air resupply drops, and the Kachin's ability to remain undetected and utilize indigenous local support in their tribal areas enabled the team to remain behind enemy lines longer than any had expected. Quite to the contrary, Detachment 101 Operations Section began to task Group A to conduct intelligence collection and special reconnaissance north of Myitkyina for follow on operations.¹⁷⁶ Barnard and A Group finally returned to Fort Hertz on June 11, 1943 after eighteen weeks behind enemy lines.¹⁷⁷ Maddox, Quinn, and Francis moving along their own evasion corridor arrived at Fort Hertz on May 16, 1943

¹⁷⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 164.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁷⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 37.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

after nearly three months of evasion. These men who had no access to resupply and were assumed dead by the rest of the detachment only survived due to the assistance of Kachin villagers who provided the men with shelter and food along the way.¹⁷⁸

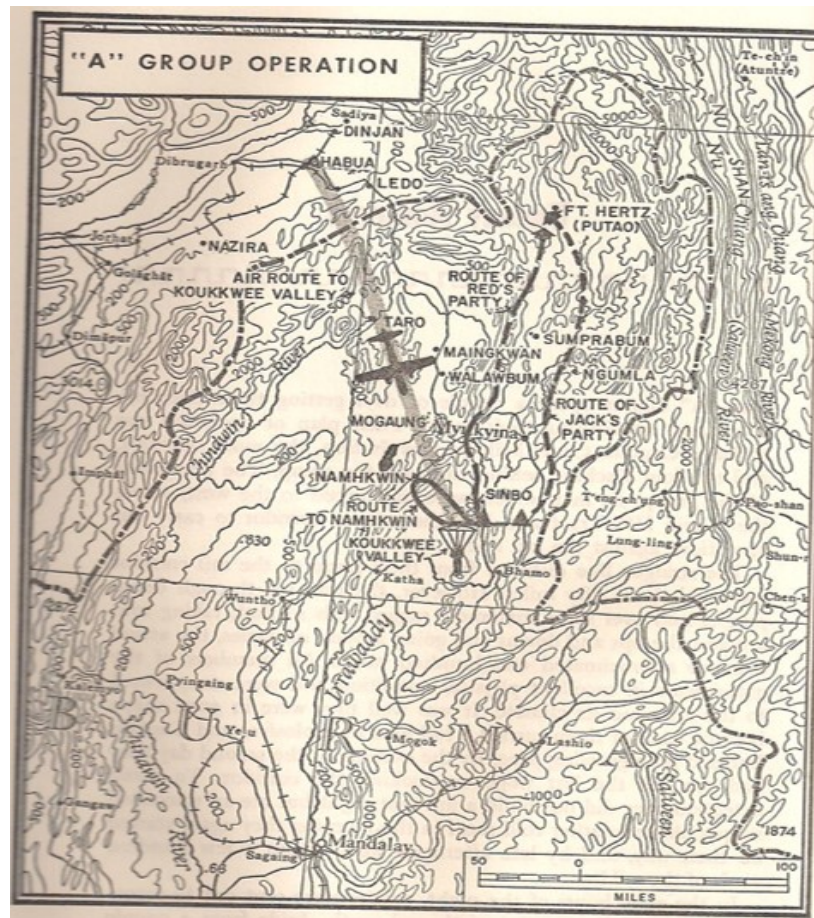


Figure 3. A Group Long Range Penetration

Source: William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 82.

¹⁷⁸ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 166.

Group A's initial efforts at sabotage were successful in destroying several railroad bridges and temporarily disrupting rail movement between Mandalay and Myitkyina.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the detachment's successful encounters with local Kachin tribesmen and the performance of Kachin agents provided an ideal force for future recruitment and development of a guerrilla force. Finally, A Group's real success was not their efforts at sabotage, but the incredible amount of tactical intelligence they obtained behind enemy lines.

Peers in his ever-thorough nature conducted a detailed after action review of A Group's operation and determined several critical lessons learned. This method of capturing lessons learned became the standard for all subsequent Detachment 101 operations. Peers stated that since the OSS lacked the experience of their SOE counterparts it was critical to establish procedural trial and error to validate operational concepts.¹⁸⁰ Operations officers in Nazira kept detailed logs regarding communications traffic and leadership decision making for future review at the conclusion of an operation. Furthermore, personnel who were present in the field, both American Operatives and indigenous agents, were expected to write or present an inclusive account of their actions both positive and negative.¹⁸¹ These presentations, written reports, as well as operational logs were reviewed in a "murder board" where each man present had the equal authority to comment on the conduct of a mission. Peers felt this practice did not create animosity

¹⁷⁹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 105.

¹⁸⁰ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 198.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

amongst detachment personnel but rather isolated sound practices from failures and developed effective operating procedures.¹⁸²

The most important of these lessons learned was Detachment 101's inadequate parachute capability, which made operational insertion and aerial resupply extremely difficult.¹⁸³ Only the parachute expertise of MSG Milligan enabled the detachment to continue the execution of airborne operations despite a lack of parachutes or a lack of qualified rigger personnel. The next critical lesson learned was the improper use of rendezvous points and rally points and the loss of communications plan for both team members on the ground and the Detachment Headquarters in Nazira.¹⁸⁴ Improvement in these areas would ensure separated Detachment 101 elements had contingency plans and alternate means to facilitate link up if they were separated in the field. Finally, the A Group Operation determined that twelve man teams were too large to operate behind enemy lines without detection.¹⁸⁵ Six man elements were ideal to their ability to handle the multitude of required operational tasks as well as their ability to achieve high mobility while still maintaining stealth.

The Detachment Headquarters also learned valuable lessons from the A Group operation in regards to communications and mission command. Eifler, Peers, and Coughlin recognized the futility in attempting to command and control long range operations where extreme distance from the operational area prevented their ability to

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 96.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 96-97.

¹⁸⁵ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 199.

determine the ground truth and gain situational awareness.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, Detachment operations framed their efforts as supporting to the ground force commander's in the field with resources and mission orders. For Detachment 101 operations, the man on the ground was not to be questioned under any circumstances. This principle of mission command would continue throughout the entire war both under Eifler's command and later under Peers.

In the four months that A Group operated behind Japanese lines, Detachment 101 conducted two additional long range penetrations. Continually driving the need for action to impress Stillwell, Carl Eifler pushed for the rapid employment of other agent teams despite the fact that A Group's operation was compromised and the team was in escape and evasion.¹⁸⁷ The location for the next long range penetration was a subject of a debate among the Detachment 101 leadership, as some believed that operation should focus on northern Burma in accordance with operational directives while others advocated for coastal operations closer to Rangoon in Southern Burma to achieve greater psychological effects against the Japanese.¹⁸⁸ The compromise was to continue the recently initiated short range penetrations in Northern Burma while focusing future long range penetrations in the south.

The next long range penetration would target southern Burma with the next group of jungle school trained agents, designated B Group. The target area for B Group was Lawksawk Valley seventy-five miles southeast of Mandalay and 200 miles south of A

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸⁷ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 37.

¹⁸⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 99.

Group's initial drop zone location.¹⁸⁹ The composition of B Group was similar to A Group with most men of Anglo-Indian descent and operationally vetted by the SOE before their handover to the OSS. The critical difference between this operation and the first was the target area. Lawksawk was located in the Shahn State where anti-British sentiment was higher. Furthermore, the drop zone was in close proximity to local villages that could potentially compromise the insertion.¹⁹⁰

Peers and Coughlin had misgivings about the reaction of the Shans to the OSS operation as well as the ability to support operations nearly 300 miles behind Japanese lines, but Eifler over-rode their concerns and directed execution.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, in order to obtain Stillwell's approval for USAAF support for the drop, Eifler agreed to conduct the parachute insertion on the outgoing portion of a C-87 sortie so that the aircraft could bomb Lashio on the return route.¹⁹² The bombing run required a daytime parachute insertion. On February 24, 1943, B Group conducted an airborne insertion in the Lawksawk Valley. As the C-87s flew north from the drop zone, OSS jumpmasters observed hundreds of local villagers rapidly advancing towards B Group.¹⁹³ These men were never heard from again. Ambition had cost Detachment 101 an entire team.

Back at OSS headquarters in Washington, Donovan was pleased with the progress he saw in Detachment 101. OSS had achieved rapid progress in the European theater but

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁹⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 37.

¹⁹¹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 105.

¹⁹² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 38.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

the continued roadblocks of General MacArthur prohibited any real progress in the Pacific War other than Eifler's Detachment. Consequently, Donovan believed that Detachment 101 was the key to Allied victory in Southeast Asia.¹⁹⁴ Donovan directed Eifler to provide an equal amount of support to the British high command in Burma in addition to supporting General Stillwell.¹⁹⁵ Responding from a request the British Eastern Army Commander, General Irwin, Eifler traveled to New Delhi to discuss the next Detachment's next long range penetration.¹⁹⁶ Irwin requested that Detachment 101 replicate A Group's sabotage on the Myitkyina railway along the Burmese coast in the Arakan area. Specifically, Irwin wanted the OSS to disrupt Japanese resupply along the Prome-Taungup coastal road.¹⁹⁷

Operations along the Burmese coast near Arakan were an entirely different problem set that Detachment 101 had no formal training in. The thick mangrove swamps throughout Arakan prevented airborne insertion and required Detachment 101 to conduct maritime insertion. Eifler lacked personnel from OSS Maritime Unit (MU) or any organic boat capability, consequently, he relied upon the Royal Navy to insert the next long range penetration, designated W Group. The Royal Navy officer in charge of the delivery ships refused to modify regulations for the detachment's mission peculiar requirements. Eifler submitted a formal request to Donovan requesting MU support for Detachment 101 citing

¹⁹⁴ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 421.

¹⁹⁵ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 208.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 40.

the reliance upon British Naval assets an unnecessary risk for clandestine maritime insertion.¹⁹⁸

On March 8, 1943, Eifler personally oversaw the insertion of W Group traveling ashore with the beach landing party. The ship to shore movement was extremely difficult due to rough surface conditions. Eifler hit his head on a large rock, resulting in a head injury that would eventually remove him from command.¹⁹⁹ After W Group's successful but tenuous insertion along the mangrove coast, the team moved inland less than a day before local villagers reported their position to the Japanese. Japanese forces surrounded W Group and in the ensuing engagement killed or captured the team to the last man.

For the duration of 1943, Detachment 101 conducted three additional long range penetrations. Two of these missions relied upon parachute insertion and the third and final relied upon maritime insertion from a British Submarine.²⁰⁰ All three of these long range operations focused their efforts in Southern Burma closer to Mandalay or Rangoon and were complete failures that resulted in the loss of all personnel to enemy action. Peers continued his after action review system to capture lessons learned, however A Group was the only element that returned to conduct such reviews. Consequently, the failures of long range penetrations were not recognized until the end of 1943. Compared to the successful short range penetrations that the detachment also executed in 1943, long range operations focused on deep area sabotage actions rather than intelligence collection and building indigenous guerrilla forces. The most important lesson learned from long

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 40-41.

¹⁹⁹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 116.

²⁰⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 42-44.

range penetrations was the need to analyze political sympathies of the indigenous populations in operational areas. The only successful long range penetration, which A Group executed, occurred in the Kachin State and with the support of Kachin tribes. This knowledge taken in conjunction with the success of short range penetrations would convince Detachment 101 to use the Kachin people as the core element to build a resistance force.

Short Range Penetrations, Learning to Live with the Kachins

While A Group continued preparation for their operation in January 1943, a small contingent of Detachment 101 operatives initiated a parallel effort intended to be an administrative and logistical support activity. This activity would eventually grow to become a full-scale guerrilla operation and the basis of all future OSS operations in Burma. Although the jungle school in Nazira had sufficient training areas to execute Peers' program of instruction, LTC Carl Eifler sought a forward training camp closer to Japanese lines that could provide agents in training with limited combat experience prior to executing long range penetrations.²⁰¹ Eifler and LTC Coughlin assessed that Fort Hertz was the most suitable location to establish a forward training camp and the prosecution of limited confidence targets. The OSS capitalized on their close relationship with the British SOE to establish an operational camp at Fort Hertz with a small contingent of Detachment 101 personnel under the command of Captain William Wilkinson.

While meeting with the British commander of Fort Hertz to approve the establishment of a training camp and a regional communication base, Eifler observed the

²⁰¹ Ibid., 48.

combat capabilities of the Kachin fighters first hand. In January 1943, a Japanese attack against Sumprabum seventy miles south of Fort Hertz met fierce resistance from Kachin levies who eventually withdrew north to Fort Hertz due to limited logistical support.²⁰² Observing the Kachins' arrival to Fort Hertz and what they had accomplished on their own, Eifler and other Detachment 101 observers found their indigenous resistance force. Following his trip to Fort Hertz, Eifler immediately wrote to Stillwell expressing his belief that Detachment 101 could unite the Kachins against the Japanese and it was "possible to raise forces in [the] hills that will be in a position to continually strike the Japanese from their flanks and from the rear."²⁰³

The Detachment 101 element at Fort Hertz, designated Operation FORWARD, maintained a close relationship with the resident SOE officer, Captain Reid. The SOE and OSS contingent at Fort Hertz developed such a close working relationship that both organizations sent joint message traffic over the same communication lines. Undoubtedly, the SOE relationship with the OSS in Burma helped solidify the idea to employ the Kachins for guerrilla operations and intelligence collection. As addressed in the second chapter, the SOE trained, equipped, and organized large numbers of Kachins for the conduct of partisan warfare against the Japanese. However, the British failed to fully mobilize the Kachin levies, possibly due to SOE personnel shortages in northern Burma as well as ongoing operational support requirements for the conventional British Army forces under General Irwin. British special operations efforts in 1943 supported

²⁰² William Wilkinson, "Problems of Guerrilla Leader," *Military Review* (November 1952): 24.

²⁰³ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 49.

Major General Orde Wingate and his Chindits in the conduct of long range penetrations.²⁰⁴

Wilkinson's initial mission only called for the establishment of a training camp and a communication relay station. However, Eifler, always attempting to sell the OSS in Burma, saw an opportunity to capitalize on the Kachin's extensive tribal network to furnish local intelligence for Stillwell and observe Japanese air movements in northern Burma for the Tenth Air Force.²⁰⁵ Armed with Eifler's intent to produce intelligence for higher consumption, CPT Wilkinson took the initiative. In February, Wilkinson moved FORWARD south into Burma near Sumprabum and began to recruit Kachins in the area as intelligence agents to infiltrate Japanese lines and report enemy dispositions and activities.²⁰⁶ As a necessary security measure while FORWARD worked in Sumprabum, Wilkinson also recruited a small Kachin guerrilla force for local security.²⁰⁷ These indigenous troops were Detachment 101's first true guerrilla force. Working with local village elders Wilkinson laid a framework for a local underground and a supporting guerrilla force.

It did not take long for Wilkinson to capitalize on the intelligence that his underground agents provided by employing his expanding guerrilla force against targets of opportunity. Wilkinson continued to build his network south towards Myitkyina

²⁰⁴ Hogan, "MacArthur, Stillwell, and Special Operations in the War Against Japan," 110.

²⁰⁵ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 49.

²⁰⁶ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 106.

²⁰⁷ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 191.

continuously expanding his intelligence network and the size of his guerrilla force. Wilkinson learned several critical factors during his first several months in command of FORWARD. These lessons were processed through Peers' lessons learned system and disseminated to other short range penetration groups. Among Wilkinson's observations, were the importance of civil military operations, financial support to the resistance movement, vetting potential agents and guerrillas, the development of tri-zonal security, inter guerrilla unit communications, and finally logistical support for guerrilla forces.

Wilkinson was eager to win support of the local Kachin headmen as he moved south and actions of good will including medical support and village construction projects appeared to be an appropriate way to reinforce a population that was already supportive of the American cause. Eifler directed a recent addition to Detachment 101, Navy doctor Lieutenant Command James Luce, to FORWARD to join Wilkinson's group.²⁰⁸ Luce provided critical medical care for Kachin guerrillas wounded in the field but also conducted rudimentary medical civic action programs (MEDCAPS) in Kachin villages.

Payment for the Kachins became a problem as operations progressed and the OSS operatives developed logical solutions on the ground based on their interactions with the indigenous population and understanding their resistance force. When Wilkinson initiated FORWARD, he paid Kachin guerrillas with silver rupees and opium.²⁰⁹ Over time, the OSS realized that excessive currency was worthless to the Kachins who rarely had access

²⁰⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 50.

²⁰⁹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 191.

to markets where they could purchase anything.²¹⁰ Consequently, opium, clothing, salt, spices, and other basic goods became the primary form of payment for guerrillas and agents.

Wilkinson's initial screening process for potential guerrillas was to have the American operatives interview recruits based on questions from their OSS basic training on agent screening.²¹¹ After several disciplinary problems, Wilkinson eventually changed this system to have the most trusted longest serving Kachins also screen potential recruits.²¹² This system enabled the Kachins to take ownership of their own paramilitary force as well as capitalized on their knowledge of locals and cultural nuances to ensure FORWARD recruited only the highest quality men.

While Wilkinson moved south building a guerrilla force and intelligence network, he realized that simple reliance on local security from guerrillas rarely provided the necessary time to react to Japanese patrols. Instead, Wilkinson connected his local guerrilla security with an early warning system enabled by his intelligence network and good relationships with local village chiefs.²¹³ This concept of layered security employing guerrillas, the underground, and auxiliaries is known in current unconventional warfare doctrine as tri-zonal security and is a critical component to the establishment of a successful area complex.

²¹⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 61.

²¹¹ Wilkinson, "Problems of Guerrilla Leader," 26.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

As FORWARD continued its movement south it also could deliver Eifler's promise to 10th Air Force to conduct personnel recovery for downed pilots in northern Burma. FORWARD's network successfully extracted Chindits operating behind Japanese lines as well as evading Army Air Force pilots adding to the already invaluable work that the contingent was achieving in intelligence collection and guerrilla operations.²¹⁴ The utility of this small OSS contingent caught Stillwell's attention. The American commander directed Eifler to focus additional efforts in support of the Kachins, and increased the authorized end strength of OSS personnel in theater.²¹⁵ Detachment 101 had already begun to overstep the roles of SO branch personnel and the small contingent of twenty Americans and a hand full of detailed Brits seemed shamefully below the required end strength. Following Stillwell's approval, Eifler wrote Donovan to request additional personnel from finance, medical, communications, research and development (R&D), secret intelligence (SI), and schools and training (S&T) branches.²¹⁶ OSS Headquarters in Washington approved these requests as the Detachment's focus slowly turned from sabotage to guerrilla warfare and intelligence.²¹⁷

In March 1943, Detachment 101 activated a second short range penetration unit designated L Group at the behest of General Stillwell. Stillwell directed Detachment 101 to support the ongoing construction of the Ledo Road that would eventually establish a

²¹⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 51.

²¹⁵ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 106.

²¹⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 30.

²¹⁷ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 106.

land route to supply the Chinese Army.²¹⁸ Again, the operational area for L Group was in the Kachin State, and again the OSS operatives and their indigenous agents were successful in capitalizing on the Kachin population to expand the resistance force. However, L Group executed few guerrilla operations and instead focused a majority of their efforts on intelligence collection and special reconnaissance. L Group produced detailed intelligence regarding Japanese positions for Army Air Force bombers to engage up to fifty miles ahead of the American engineer units constructing the Ledo Road.²¹⁹ The willingness of the SO heavy Detachment 101 to engage in intelligence collection caught the attention of Donovan in Washington, who directed SI branch to integrate operatives into Eifler's organization.

In Nazira, long Range Penetration efforts continued to consume the attention of Detachment 101 leadership throughout the first half of 1943. Meanwhile, FORWARD and L Group established a network of Kachin guerrillas and underground agents projecting south towards Myitkyina originating at Ft. Hertz and Ledo, respectively. By April, Wilkinson had established the detachment's first advanced operating base in Ngumla to support his expanding guerrilla force.²²⁰ Although Wilkinson had a natural talent for learning and adapting to the Kachin's local culture two additions to FORWARD group greatly enabled the rapid expansion of Kachin recruiting in the second half of 1943.

²¹⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 52.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 52-53.

²²⁰ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 106.

First, the long awaited return of A Group's long range penetration in June 1943, allowed agents and officers who participated in that operation to join short range penetrations and apply their lessons learned from living amongst the Kachins to expanding the guerrilla force.²²¹ Second, two Catholic missionaries who had spent years working with the Kachins in Northern Burma approached Eifler and offered their services to help the Americans expand their relationship with the Kachins. Father Dennis MacAlindon and Father Jim Stuart were a tremendous value added to the OSS operations by serving as interpreters with local Kachins and Karens as well as cultural advisors for the American operatives.²²² Wilkinson described MacAlindon's arrival as the end of the Detachment's language and cultural barrier with the Kachins in FORWARDS' area of operation.²²³

Hoping to reinforce success while the main effort floundered, Detachment Operations reinforced L Group with additional personnel from Nazira; placing the consolidated effort under Vincent Curl.²²⁴ Curl, now a lieutenant from a battlefield promotion, assumed control of L Group with orders to establish a guerrilla force of similar size and capabilities as that of Wilkinson's FORWARD with an operational area spreading from Ledo to Mogaung.²²⁵ Eifler intended Curl's new formation, designated KNOTHEAD to tie down Japanese forces in the conduct of counter-guerrilla operations

²²¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 51-53.

²²² Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 207-208.

²²³ Wilkinson, "Problems of Guerrilla Leader," 25.

²²⁴ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 107.

²²⁵ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 213.

in the Kachin Mountains in order to enable Chinese Army forces to advance south towards Myitkyina through the Hukawng Valley.²²⁶

Again, the lessons learned from A Group's evasion turned stay behind operation had a tremendous impact on the future conduct of Detachment 101's guerrilla operations. Curl, who had participated in the debriefing of A Group in June of 1943, learned from Red Maddox about a Kachin tribal leader named Zhing Htaw Naw.²²⁷ Zhing led a large indigenous resistance force deep in the jungles and mountains of the Kachin State. His name was legendary throughout the Kachin ethnic areas, and Zhing provided direct assistance for Red and fellow agents during his extended evasion from Namhkwin.²²⁸ Curl made his first priority for KNOTHEAD to find Zhing and attempt to recruit his already large guerrilla force into Detachment 101's efforts.

KNOTHEAD spent several weeks searching for Zhing Htaw Naw and eventually found the tribal elder, sick from malaria. OSS medical support brought the tribal leader, or "duwa," back from near death.²²⁹ This demonstration of good will as well as American military and sustainment capacity won over Zhing instantaneously. Zhing agreed to provide operational control of his men to Detachment 101 providing he still led them and the Americans provided food, arms, supplies, and payment.²³⁰ Capitalizing on the jungle grapevine, which was quickly abuzz with reports of Zhing's involvement with the

²²⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 53.

²²⁷ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 214.

²²⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 94.

²²⁹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 218.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

Americans, Curl further cultivated Kachin good will by conducting civil military operations in the same manner as FORWARD Group. Curl established a forward operating base at Nawbum. Curl's Nawbum base camp included a field landing strip that increased logistical resupply capacity for the unit beyond what airdrops could provide.²³¹

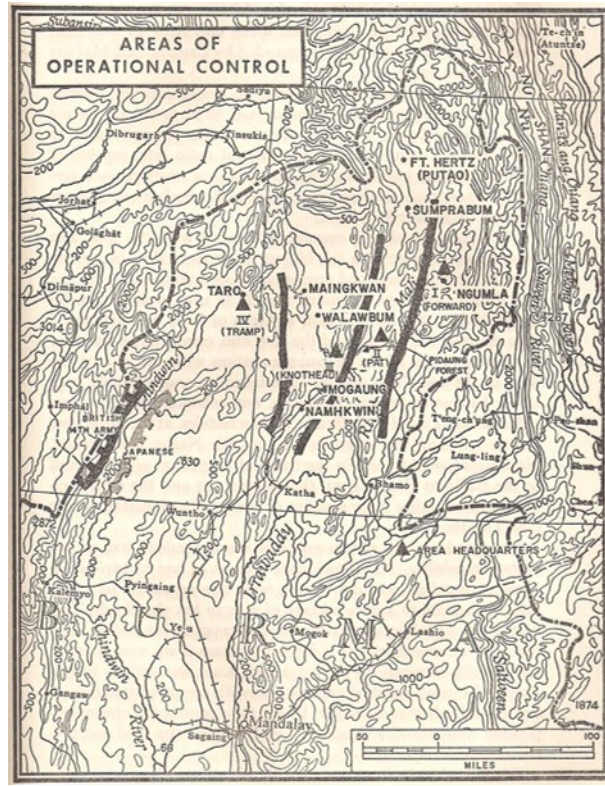


Figure 4. Detachment 101 Area Commands 1943 and 1944

Source: William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 220.

²³¹ Ibid.

Latent and Incipient, Lessons
Learned from 1943

By the end of 1943, Detachment 101 had built a force of 1800 guerrillas across three subordinate areas of operation (FORWARD, KNOTHEAD, and PAT), established two forward advanced operations bases, and eleven forward radio stations that enabled constant intelligence collection and dissemination to headquarters in Nazira.²³² Despite these successes, Detachment 101's primary operational focus in 1943 was always long range penetrations. Eifler remained focused on winning Stillwell's approval with these high profile operations and only emphasized short range penetrations to highlight success when so many of the long range penetrations met failure.

Throughout 1943, the individual operatives of Detachment 101 quickly learned how to reinforce success and discontinue flawed practices. Peers' after action reviews and information dissemination processes created a system that continually developed the unit. This lessons learned system improved the jungle school at Nazira, which trained both guerrillas and underground agents from FORWARD and KNOTHEAD in addition to long range penetration teams. Furthermore, Peers' after action review system enabled rapid dissemination of A Groups experiences in Kachin areas as well as FORWARD's initial experiences with the Kachins to provide Curl with advanced cultural knowledge to recruit Zhing Htaw Naw.

These successes were not the only events that improved Detachment 101 operations. Long range penetration failures provided experiences regarding the difficulties of aerial resupply as well as static line airborne operations from the C-87

²³² Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 107-108.

aircraft. Only the ingenuity and parachute expertise of MSG Milligan enabled Detachment 101 to modify parachutes, aircraft, static line cables, and equipment for airdrop while at the same time providing a basic airborne course for indigenous agents at Nazira. Aerial resupply became the lifeblood of Detachment 101 operations and in June of 1943, OSS headquarters repositioned several aircraft to Detachment 101's control.²³³ These piper cubs and bi-planes provided aerial resupply when 14th Air Force could not, and enabled rapid movement throughout the operational area when operating from short take off landing (STOL) airstrips such as Nawbum and Ngumla. This organic air capability as well as a steadily improving relationship with the Air Forces due to OSS personnel recovery operations enabled a nine hundred percent increase in aerial resupply tonnage over the period of September to December 1943.²³⁴

Failures in logistical support were too numerous to catalog including a lack of vehicles, indigenous weapons system support, financial shortages in local currency, and limited radio equipment.²³⁵ Consequently, a majority of Detachment 101's incoming personnel in 1944 were logistical support augmentations. Furthermore, Detachment 101 put aside its special operations bravado and developed a strong relationship with the US Army Services of Supply in order to ensure sustainment for a guerrilla force that was simply beyond the means of the OSS supply system to support.²³⁶

²³³ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 69.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

Finally, Detachment 101 learned the hard lesson that every special operations unit learns the importance of liaison. By its nature as an OSS organization, Detachment 101 understood the value of personal and professional relationships. Relationships are the key to successful agent handling techniques, navigating foreign cultures, leading guerrilla forces, and negotiating the political environment, which sits adjacent to operations conducted at the operational and strategic level. Eifler, a master of personnel relationships knew this fact and established Detachment 101 liaisons as one of his first acts in theater. However, Eifler's initial liaison with SOE and Stillwell's headquarters was far short of the required amount. Most often, liaison shortcomings failed to create synergy with British military elements. A Group's operational area in February 1943 was adjacent to an ongoing British Chindit long range penetration.²³⁷ Following this mishap, Detachment 101 embedded liaison across British military units in addition to the SOE. Lessons from these liaison issues enabled unparalleled synergy in 1944 as Detachment 101 developed a symbiotic relationship with a fellow American Special Operations Force, Merrill's Marauders. Furthermore, the intelligence that Detachment 101 provided to the British 14th Army under the command of General Slim greatly improved Anglo-American relations in the CBI Theater.²³⁸

By the close of 1943, Stillwell realized that Detachment 101's true value was the intelligence that it collected and its growing guerrilla force, which provided him an ability to strike the Japanese that the Chinese Army had yet to fulfill.²³⁹ Despite the

²³⁷ Ibid., 36.

²³⁸ Ibid., 65.

²³⁹ Ibid., 58.

failures of the strategic sabotage that Donovan and Stillwell had envisioned for Detachment 101, the adaptability of the operatives on ground created effects far beyond what the sum of fifty Americans could ever achieve unilaterally. While Detachment 101's insurgency was in its incipient phase, two outside events would further mark the next transformation of Detachment 101.

First, in May 1943 the Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met in Washington for the Trident Conference to discuss the future of the CBI Theater. The most critical event of this conference was the establishment of South East Asia Command (SEAC) under Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander.²⁴⁰ Stillwell became Deputy Commander for SEAC and remained as the Commander of US Army Forces CBI (USAF CBI), now designated as North Combat Area Command (NCAC).²⁴¹ American efforts in Burma and China were now firmly in a supporting role to the British Army. Up until this point, the US CBI campaign plan focused on countering Japanese Air assets at Myitkyina airfield from interdicting aerial resupply along the "hump" into China as well as the construction of Ledo Road into China. Both of these efforts enabled US support to Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist army for continued resistance against Japanese forces.²⁴²

The following month at the Quadrant Conference, the Combined Joint Staff outlined the operational design for success in the CBI Theater. SEAC would first, carry

²⁴⁰ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 6.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

out operations to capture Upper Burma to improve the air route and establish overland communications with China and finally continue to build up and supply of Chinese forces to intensify operations against the Japanese.²⁴³ Instead of simply disrupting Japanese air operations at Myitkyina, which were the initial objectives of Detachment 101's long range penetrations, NCAC would have to focus all available combat power to seize Myitkyina Airfield.²⁴⁴ NCAC's shaping operation would enable the British 14th Army under Slim to attack deep into northern Burma to capture the territory and defeat the defending Japanese forces. Detachment 101's short range penetrations had created a viable resistance force with the right partner, at the right place, at the right time.

²⁴³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

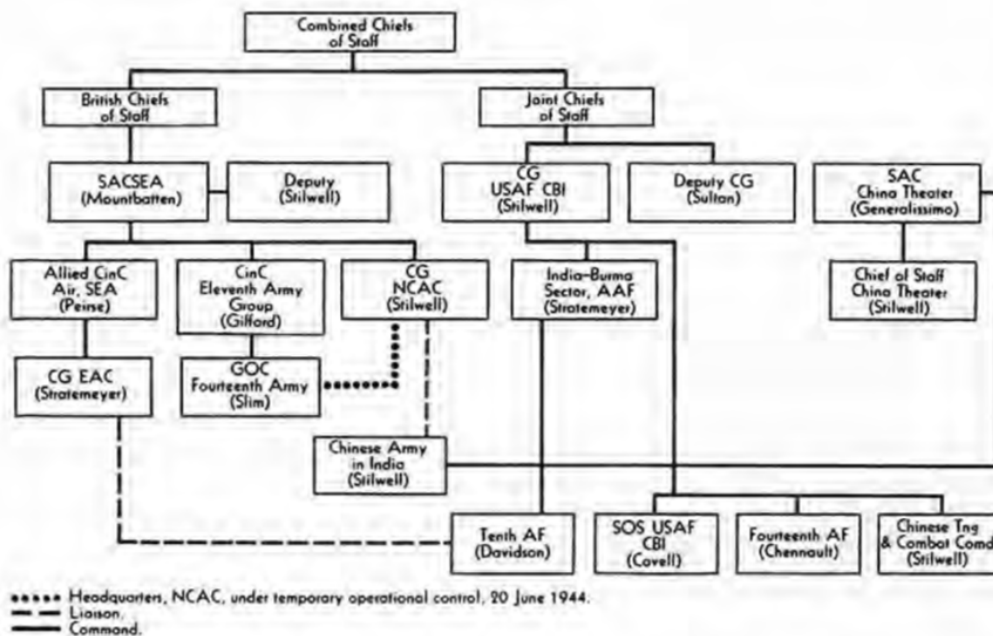


Figure 5. CBI Theater Command Structure 1943 and 1944

Source: Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History United States Army, 1987), 6.

The second critical event occurred at OSS Headquarters in Washington, DC. Capitalizing on his unfettered access to the President of the United States as well as the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Donovan secured an important role for the OSS at the Quadrant Conference.²⁴⁵ SEAC Supreme Allied Commander Mountbatten had previously planned Special Operations missions for the Royal Marine Commandos in the European Theater, and was eager to increase the role of the OSS, SOE, and Chindits in the Burmese Theater.²⁴⁶ Donovan became convinced that Detachment 101 was the key to Allied

²⁴⁵ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 421.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

victory in Southeast Asia, but became increasingly concerned about Carl Eifler's ability to command such an operation.²⁴⁷ Success in 1944 required new leadership and a new approach for Detachment 101.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4
KACHIN RANGERS 1944 AND 1945

Change of Command, Peers Reforms
Detachment 101

Nearly eight months had passed since the failed insertion of W Group on Ramree Island along the Arakan coast. That fateful night in March 1943 while personally accompanying W Group, Eifler sustained a serious head injury towing five rubber boats back to the waiting British surface ships.²⁴⁸ Eifler self-medicated with alcohol and morphine in the months following the injury but the pain failed to subside.²⁴⁹ Despite his continued successful command of Detachment 101, Eifler's health and mental attitude deteriorated considerably. By the end of 1943, Carl Eifler discontinued his prescribed medical treatment. The unrelenting headaches prevented Eifler from sleeping and he was intolerant to any advice.²⁵⁰ Increased exhaustion coupled with self-medication brought the OSS officer to the state of nervous breakdown.

Colonel Eifler's degrading mental state was well known to General Donovan in Washington, DC. The OSS director became increasingly concerned about the mental stability of 101's commander following his head injury.²⁵¹ Fresh from the Quadrant Conference where he had secured an important role for Detachment 101 in the upcoming campaign against Myitkyina Airfield, Donovan directed an OSS officer, Duncan Lee, to

²⁴⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 41.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 132.

²⁵¹ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 421.

conduct an official inspection of Detachment 101.²⁵² Eifler refused to cooperate with Lee, in a false bravado that more than likely won approval amongst his fellow operatives but only gained the scorn of his superiors in Washington. Eifler instructed Lee that because he was a colonel he did not have to submit to an inspection from a junior officer. Eifler added, “if Donovan has something to say to me, let him come and say it.”²⁵³ In fairness to Eifler, Lee probably came off as a Washington bureaucrat, a trait abhorred by Eifler as well as all other officers in Detachment 101. Ray Peers noted that Lee looked “the worse for wear” in the Burmese jungle and the desk-bound Washington officer gave the impression that he had no authority from which to discuss future campaigns in North Burma.²⁵⁴

Donovan was shocked to hear Lee’s report about Eifler’s disregard for Washington’s authority and determined that he would personally travel to Burma and relieve Eifler from command.²⁵⁵ Donovan arrived in Nazira in early November 1943, where his initial inspections oversaw the jungle school and Detachment 101’s operations center. Donovan was impressed with how the SO operatives had accomplished so much with so little support.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, Donovan noted the lack of personnel and limited support available for Detachment 101’s varied missions. Donovan sent cables to Washington from Detachment 101 Headquarters directing greater prioritization for

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 253.

²⁵⁵ Dunlop, *Donovan America’s Master Spy*, 422.

²⁵⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 130-131.

support and instructing OSS Branch chiefs to travel to Burma to gain first hand observation of the hybrid special operations and intelligence activities that the unit was undertaking.²⁵⁷

The pleasantries were short lived, however. Eifler's operations and intelligence briefing to General Donovan reflected a disorganized operational approach for OSS and American success in Burma. Eifler spoke highly of the geographic range of long range penetrations across Burma as well as up to seven different branches and sequels for employing SO teams and guerrillas in Burma.²⁵⁸ Donovan was not impressed by Eifler's planning abilities. The OSS director chastised the Colonel with a torrent of soft spoken but harsh words. "Well Eifler, what are you doing . . . you are too god-damned ambiguous about organizing."²⁵⁹ Somewhat insulted by his commanding general's response, Eifler offered to take Donovan to the front lines where he could assess the situation personally. Donovan was at heart a field officer who relished the opportunity to be near the action. Donovan agreed and the two men flew to Nawbum where they met Vincent Curl and the operatives of KNOTHEAD. In addition to a personal inspection of the Kachin Guerrillas, Donovan met with Zhing Htaw Naw solidifying American commitment to the hill tribes of Burma.²⁶⁰

Following the trip to KNOTHEAD and Detachment 101 Headquarters, Donovan instructed the OSS in Washington to transfer ten new aircraft to Eifler for upcoming

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 131.

²⁵⁸ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 422.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 424.

operations against Myitkyina.²⁶¹ Eifler's triumphant public relations trip in the Burmese jungle was short lived, as his health continued to deteriorate. By December 1943, he was unable to perform his daily duties. For all of his admiration for Carl Eifler, Donovan realized that the strategic effects of Detachment 101 on the CBI Theater were too important to place upon chance. On December 11, 1943, Donovan relieved Carl Eifler of command of Detachment 101 for physical and medical reasons.²⁶² Donovan promoted Colonel John Coughlin, Eifler's fellow company commander from Hawaii, as the Chief OSS officer in the CBI Theater. Coughlin then selected LTC Ray Peers to take command of Detachment 101. Furthermore, Coughlin kept the same command relationships with Peers in command of Detachment 101 as the former OSS CBI Chief Milton Miles had with Eifler.²⁶³ This command relationship was based on the principles of mission command and capitalized on Coughlin's complete trust in Peers' abilities. Instead of reporting through an additional layer to communicate with OSS Washington or Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), Peers had free reign to operate as he saw fit.²⁶⁴

Eifler's loss was an emotional event for the men of Detachment 101. Eifler had handpicked a majority of Detachment 101's initial personnel and in many cases; these operatives had relationships with Eifler that traced back to before the war. The consensus was Washington sacked Eifler because "he was doing too well and not taking any crap

²⁶¹ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 261.

²⁶² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 132.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

off any of them.”²⁶⁵ Fortunately, Peers was a highly respected officer within Detachment 101 and despite the loss of the popular former commander, the unit was easily receptive to his well-established leadership. Peers, who was a far more organized and attentive to detail than Eifler, sought to discontinue the brash and haphazard style that had characterized past Detachment 101 operations. Consequently, Peers discontinued any planning for future long range penetrations, electing to focus all operations on the ongoing guerrilla efforts in northern Burma.²⁶⁶ Peers outlined several clearly defined objectives that OSS planners were to consider for any future operation. These objectives included intelligence collection on Japanese military movement and intentions, locating targets for USAAF, personnel recovery for downed Allied pilots, and continued expansion of guerrilla warfare against the Japanese.²⁶⁷

Within a month of Peers’ change of command, a flood of additional new OSS personnel arrived in Burma to join Detachment 101. Stillwell and Eifler had requested additional personnel from branches other than SO in March of 1943 to augment success in short range penetrations. However, the rapid turnaround from Donovan’s visit and his subsequent emphasis on resourcing the CBI Theater more than likely enabled the new assignments in January 1944. Among the branch augmentations to Detachment 101 were Morale Operations (MO), Secret Intelligence (SI), Research and Analysis (R&A), Schools and Training (S&T), Maritime Unit (MU), and Research and Development

²⁶⁵ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 262.

²⁶⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 73.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

(R&D).²⁶⁸ These new personnel nearly doubled the operational personnel of Detachment 101 and enabled rapid expansion in fields, which SO personnel had undertaken as additional duties.

As capacity expanded, the operational requirements for Detachment 101 and the scope of their operational area increased. MU serves as a prime example of an additional capability that created additional work. Since Peers discontinued long range penetrations and current operations centered on the land locked North Burma Mountains, the maritime insertions of 1943 were irrelevant to building the Kachin Guerrilla Force. Nevertheless, the arrival of MU and the clandestine water craft that Eifler had requested prior to W Group's insertion were left without a clear purpose. Detachment 101 continued its legacy of expanding roles where opportunity presented itself. The Detachment 101 MU section chief, Ensign William Shepherd recommended operational tasks to Peers that further engendered USAAF support throughout the CBI.²⁶⁹ Based out of Ceylon with OSS Detachment 404, Shepherd conducted personnel recovery for Allied Pilots shot down in the Bay of Bengal, harassed Japanese coastal traffic, and executed clandestine insertions with the British SOE maritime component.²⁷⁰

The SI personnel who arrived at Detachment 101 in January 1944 fell in on a fairly well developed clandestine intelligence network. Despite their limited training in tradecraft, OSS SO operatives had created an effective network of intelligence agents mostly through the support of local missionaries and the Kachin people. In addition to

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 86-90.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 77.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

rapidly expanding the intelligence networks in Northern Burma, SI operatives increased the quality of agent operations in the field and reformed the intelligence process for Detachment 101.²⁷¹ SI operatives organized Detachment 101's area of operations into eight subordinate regions focused on producing focused intelligence for NCAC and SEAC consumers.²⁷² The "desks" for these regions organized reports and worked closely with assigned R&A personnel to process reports from SI and SO operatives. Detachment 101 had developed its own internal intelligence prioritization, collection, analysis, and dissemination capability. The most striking feature of Detachment 101's SI capacity compared to other OSS units was its close relationship with SO personnel. Since SO branch formed the nucleus of Detachment 101 operations all incoming branches were assigned to pre-existing sections. Consequently, SI and SO personnel worked in unified sections instead of the conventional OSS model of separate directorates.

Another critical addition to Detachment 101 was the arrival of MO personnel under the direction of Charles Fenn. Morale Operations had failed to achieve any effects for Detachment 101 up until 1944 and Peers instructed Fenn to generate results as rapidly as possible.²⁷³ Fenn, who was a reporter before joining the Marines and later the OSS, studied propaganda and psychological operations from the SOE subject matter expert, Professor JD Bernal.²⁷⁴ Bernal, an ardent communist, understood the necessity of

²⁷¹ Ibid., 88.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Charles Fenn, *At the Dragon's Gate: With the OSS in the Far East* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 15.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

dominating the narrative in modern warfare and the necessity to psychologically degrade an opponent by exploiting his fears, assumptions, and weaknesses. Consequently, Fenn intended to achieve two primary objectives with morale operations. First, rumors to deceive or disrupt the Japanese Army or Burmese sympathizers and second, messages that incited native hostility against the Japanese occupation for the purposes of enlisting support.²⁷⁵

By 1944, the OSS had written lengthy doctrine for Morale Operations. The primary implementation techniques for achieving the desired effects of a morale campaign were agent inserted false intelligence, rumors, false leaflets, pamphlets, freedom stations, and document forgeries.²⁷⁶ Fenn demonstrated creativity in executing these implementations of psychological warfare; however, his greatest strength was ability to apply such techniques to the indigenous population. Like so many other Detachment 101 operatives, Fenn knew little of Burma's culture. However, Fenn had over a year's worth of operational experience and hundreds of agents in training to assimilate an understanding of how the Burmese people thought. Fenn assessed that the Burmese were traditionally subservient, boastful, and two faced after a century of colonial domination.²⁷⁷ Capitalizing on this weakness, Fenn developed duplicate orders from Japanese high command directing the Burmese to harass the Chins for providing

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

²⁷⁶ Office of Strategic Services, *Morale Operations Field Manual, Strategic Services (Provisional)* (Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 1943), 10.

²⁷⁷ Fenn, *At the Dragon's Gate*, 19.

intelligence and support to re-establish British rule.²⁷⁸ The effect was internal strife and social fracturing between Japan's sympathetic population groups in Burma, the Chins and the Burmese.

While Donovan poured resources and new capabilities into Detachment 101, Stillwell's NCAC prepared for the upcoming offensive into Northern Burma. Despite his position as second in command of the SEAC, Stillwell also served as the Commanding General of the Chinese Army in India consisting of the 22nd and 38th Chinese Divisions.²⁷⁹ In this role as the CG of Chinese Army of India Stillwell's tactical command fell under Slim's Fourteenth Army. For the early campaigns of 1944, the American NCAC would directly support British operational objectives. In addition to the 22nd and 3th Divisions, Stillwell's NCAC received American infantry forces in December 1943 with the activation of the 5307th Regiment (Provisional) or Task Force Galahad.²⁸⁰

The 5307th consisted of specialty selected infantryman who had performed well in past jungle campaigns or had demonstrated a high capacity to succeed in jungle warfare. Despite the questionable selection of such personnel, the men of Task Force Galahad received extensive training in jungle warfare and small unit tactics in order to conduct long range penetration operations in conjunction with Wingate's Chindits.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 17.

²⁷⁹ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 28.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

²⁸¹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 112-113.

Stillwell preferred to maintain an inner circle of officers with whom he had personal relationships, just as he had with Carl Eifler. Consequently, Stillwell selected a trusted subordinate, Frank D. Merrill to command the 5307th, later known as Merrill's Marauders. Stillwell envisioned that Brigadier General Merrill and his Marauders could conduct limited special operations and serve as a "strategic cavalry" to conduct reconnaissance, screens, and envelopments in support of NCAC's two Chinese Divisions.²⁸²

In addition to the arrival of the 5307, Slim directed Orde Wingate to execute long range penetrations in NCAC's area of operations.²⁸³ Supported by the recently activated 1st Air Commando Group, the forerunner of the US Air Force 1st Special Operations Wing, Stillwell's combat power for the Northern Burma campaign of 1944 was markedly heavy with special operations forces.²⁸⁴ Detachment 101, Merrill's Marauders, and Wingate's Chindits would serve as combat multipliers to enable Chinese Army units to conduct decisive operations against the Japanese defenders.

With sufficient forces available to return to the operational offensive in Burma, Stillwell issued his orders to Ray Peers in February of 1944. Outlining his plan to Peers, Stillwell explained that the Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions would attack along an axis of advance through the Hukawng Valley with the 5307th as a flanking force to envelop Japanese that the Chinese fixed.²⁸⁵ Next Stillwell envisioned Chindits to serve as a

²⁸² Ibid., 114.

²⁸³ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 115.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 18.

diversion and disruption force south of Myitkyina to prevent mass against NCAC's decisive operation, the seizure of Myitkyina Airfield.²⁸⁶ Supporting both the Chinese divisions and Task Force Galahad, Stillwell outlined Detachment 101's role in the campaign. The OSS and their Kachin Rangers would harass Japanese supply lines, support limited attacks, provide route reconnaissance and trail guides to other NCAC units, and finally execute espionage activities to determine Japanese composition and disposition around Myitkyina.²⁸⁷ Stillwell further directed Peers to nearly double Detachment 101's partisan force to a size of 3,000 guerrillas.²⁸⁸

Confident that his unit was up to the task, Peers returned to Nazira to reorganize Detachment 101 for the inclusion of newly arrived OSS branches as well as the rapid expansion of guerrilla forces to meet Stillwell's intent. Peers, who excelled at conventional military operations as well as unconventional warfare, believed that an effective staff organization would be able to facilitate command and control over such a geographically dispersed force that conducted a myriad of intelligence activities and strategic services. Under Eifler's command, few staff officers other than Peers and Coughlin were available to plan and oversee operations. With Coughlin's promotion out of the unit and Peers' new role as the Detachment Commander, the Nazira staff lacked the ability to effectively incorporate new branches as well as oversee the guerrilla forces. With the influx of new personnel, Peers established a staff that could accomplish three main tasks: empower leaders in the field, maintain liaison with a growing number of units

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 19.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 111.

and commands in Burma, and enable Peers to focus on the operational design or “big picture” of the campaign.²⁸⁹

The first challenge in reorganizing Detachment 101 was establishing an effective command and control system. The current operational areas of KNOTHEAD, FORWARD, and TRAMP were based on Detachment 101’s initial command and control capabilities. However, Stillwell’s calls for expanded guerrilla forces operating hundreds of miles deeper into Japanese territory required a radical departure from Eifler’s centralized direction from Nazira. Peers established “area control” as a means to ensure mission command to his subordinate area commanders.²⁹⁰ Peers designated FORWARD, PAT, and KNOTHEAD as Areas I, II, and III, respectively.²⁹¹ The concept of area commands originated in OG Branch, where an area headquarters would equate to a regimental echelon under OSS commanders.²⁹² Unlike the OG model where an area command purely oversaw guerrilla operations, Detachment 101 area commanders held complete responsibility over all OSS operations in their assigned areas; including guerrilla warfare, sabotage, espionage, or psychological warfare.²⁹³

Peers increased the capabilities of each Area Command to conduct the breadth of operations by assigning personnel from SI, SO, OG, MO to serve as subordinate staff

²⁸⁹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 90.

²⁹⁰ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 136.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Office of Strategic Services Schools and Training Branch, *Office of Strategic Services Organization and Functions*, 19.

²⁹³ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 136.

officers for each area command. The creation of mixed staffs at the Area Command level enabled effective direction of all aspects of OSS activities in an area of operations and further enabled effective communication from subordinate teams to Detachment level sections at Nazira. In effect, Peers created a networked organization where information could pass through multiple channels to provide information to higher headquarters and likewise, the commander's vision could easily flow through multiple disciplines and specializations to each commander in the field. Critical to this organizational model was Ray Peers, who took an active interest and gained a mastery in almost every function of Detachment 101. His ability to visualize and communicate desired effects for each subordinate OSS branch enabled a common operational picture and vision for the campaign across Detachment 101.

As Peers reorganized Detachment 101, NCAC made task organization changes for the upcoming advance on Myitkyina. In March 1944, Stillwell transferred V-Force to Detachment 101 control.²⁹⁴ V Force was a combined British and American unit that Stillwell formed in 1943 to recruit and train native personnel to conduct reconnaissance patrols and screen flanks.²⁹⁵ Peers designated V Force as TRAMP group and assigned this organization to Area Command IV, covering the western most flank of Stillwell's advance.²⁹⁶ In order to integrate TRAMP into the rest of Detachment 101's operations Peers selected Red Maddox, a veteran of A Group and FORWARD, to take command of

²⁹⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 90.

²⁹⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 110.

²⁹⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 90.

TRAMP.²⁹⁷ The Detachment had increased the size of its indigenous assets as well as gained control over numerous conventional American and British military officers. Peers completely integrated TRAMP and Area Command IV into Detachment 101 by mirroring the other groups' organizational structure and cross pollinating personnel to ensure a common approach to employing indigenous assets.

In addition to transferring control of V Force to Detachment 101, SEAC and NCAC established P Division as a formal means to de-conflict the numerous special operations units operating throughout the CBI Theater. Originally established under the directives of the Quadrant Conference in 1943, P Division began as a loose meeting forum that neither the British nor the Americans intended on fully supporting.²⁹⁸ P Division intended to de-conflict OSS and SOE operations as well as the Special Operations of the Chindits and other US Army intelligence activities in CBI. However, national pride and the competing egos of special operations units delayed the effectiveness of this organization for months.

By the beginning of June 1944, P Division evolved from its initial dysfunction to become an effective committee for coordinating operations between Merrill's Marauders, OSS Detachments 101 and 404, the SOE, and Wingate's Chindits. These forums for liaison and de-confliction were integral in pairing Kachin Ranger units with Marauder and Chindit long range penetrations in the upcoming campaign to seize Myitkyina. Coughlin's role as the chief OSS officer in the CBI and Peers' assumption of an additional duty as P Division Coordinating Officer for Burma ensured Detachment 101's

²⁹⁷ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 141.

²⁹⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 65.

equities were more than sufficiently advocated for in P Division meetings.²⁹⁹ Just as Detachment 101 had excelled under Carl Eifler in influencing higher headquarters through liaison and personal relationships, Peers built upon this tradition by networking with Stillwell, Merrill, and the SOE to secure Detachment 101 an unprecedented level of influence throughout SEAC.³⁰⁰

The Campaign for Myitkyina; Marauders,
Chindits, and Kachins

In Burma, terrain is the greatest variable for any conventional military operation and the greatest adversary is the jungle. In the months following the Trident Conference Stillwell's G3, Colonel Robert Cannon spent months preparing detailed staff estimates for the upcoming campaign to seize Myitkyina Airfield.³⁰¹ The development of this plan, under the codename ALBACORE, relied upon a phased approach to securing key mountain passes and river crossing points to encircle Japanese forces around Myitkyina.³⁰² ALBACORE utilized the Hukawng Valley and the adjacent Taro Plain as the primary avenue of approach south for the large Chinese 38th and 22nd Divisions with the Chinese 113th Regiment and Merrill's Marauders moving along two eastern axes, the Tanai Hka and Mali Hka Rivers, respectively.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 66.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 66-67.

³⁰¹ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 39.

³⁰² Ibid., 41.

³⁰³ Ibid., 40.

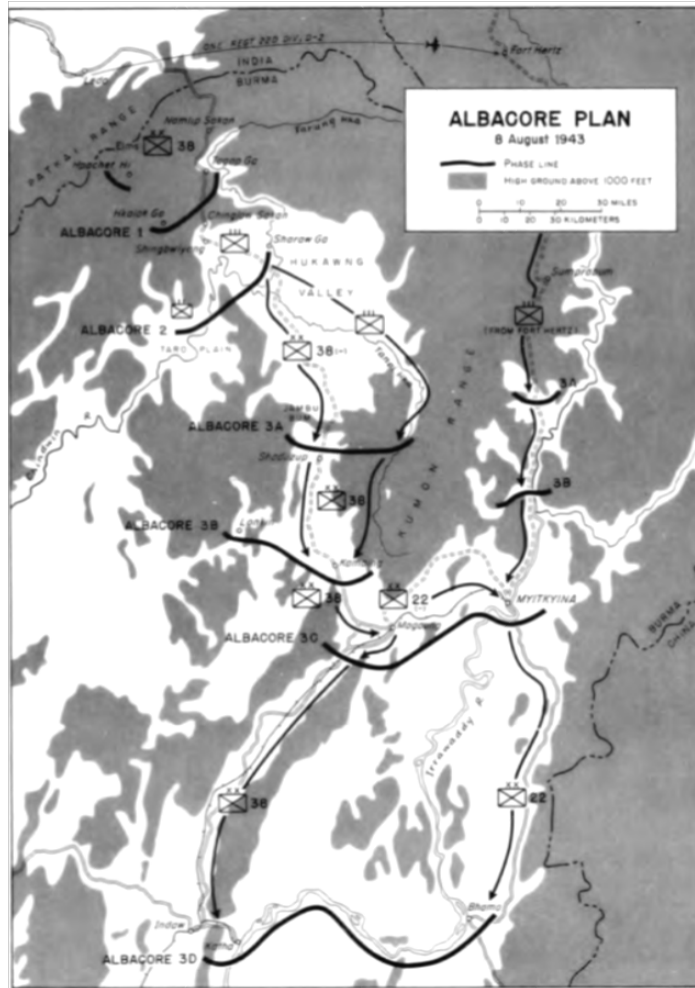


Figure 6. Operation Albacore, Stillwell's Campaign Plan for Myitkyina

Source: Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History United States Army, 1987), 40.

Stillwell initiated operations to gain a foothold into the Hukawng Valley in October 1943, but stiff Japanese resistance from the 18th Japanese Division held off the Chinese advance. The Japanese defense and American-Anglo-Sino frictions at the Sextant Conference of November 1944 delayed full implementation of the plan for

several months.³⁰⁴ In February 1944, Merrill's Marauders were operational and Stillwell was ready to return to the offensive.³⁰⁵ After rapidly re-organizing Detachment 101 in his first few months as commander, Peers passed his orders for supporting the upcoming campaign to his subordinate area commanders. Vincent Curl and KNOTHEAD would be the main effort for Detachment 101's supporting campaign plan, since Area Command III included the Hukawng Valley and the Tanai Hka Rivers. All area commands were to continue their intelligence collection for passing targets onto the USAAF as well as dispatch Kachin Rangers to conduct ambushes, raids, and limited attacks in Japanese rear areas.³⁰⁶ Additionally, Kachin agents were to serve as guides and scouts for the 5307th in their advance south through the Burmese jungle.

Peers authorized direct liaison authority for Curl to meet with Merrill and plan combined operations. Captain Curl's ability to work with and influence General Merrill is a testament to the personality of the OSS officer. Curl, a career NCO and Pearl Harbor Veteran, must have appeared from another world when he met General Merrill on February 20, 1944. Curl had a flowing beard down to his chest and in conjunction with his ally Zhing Htaw Naw, commanded nearly over a thousand native warriors. Just as he had previously won over native tribesmen with his personality and confidence, Curl gained the trust of Frank Merrill, who had initially dismissed the OSS and ignored Peers' recommendations for future Marauder jungle operations.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 82.

³⁰⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 141.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 144.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 141.

The Marauders first action took place on March 2, 1944 near Walawbum, forty miles north of Myitkyina. While Chinese forces met stiff resistance in the Hakawng Valley and the Taro Plain, the 5307th conducted a deep envelopment through the jungle to establish roadblocks near Walawbum and block Japanese reinforcements from the south.³⁰⁸ The Marauders were largely successful in this operation and Detachment 101's KNOTHEAD elements ambushed Japanese units attempting to bypass the American roadblocks. Due to a vast experience in jungle warfare and the Kachin's mastery of the ambush, Detachment 101 inflicted over 150 Japanese casualties at the expense of one wounded guerrilla during four days of action near Walawbum.³⁰⁹

Throughout March of 1944, Detachment 101's relationship with the 5307th continued to improve due to the personal engagement of KNOTHEAD operatives with the leadership and soldiers of the Marauders. Curl continued to pass valuable intelligence to Merrill while Father James Stuart, the Catholic priest who joined the detachment in 1943, administered Christian services to the US infantrymen.³¹⁰ In addition to integrating themselves into the daily military activities of the 5307th, Curl continued to improve operational interoperability between the Kachin Rangers and the Marauders. Curl designated Lieutenant James Tilley to form a special contingent of Zhing Htaw Naw's best guerrillas in direct support of the 1st Marauder Battalion.³¹¹ Designated as the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 142.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 144.

³¹⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 116.

³¹¹ C. H. Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers: Allied Guerrillas in World War II Burma," *Special Warfare* 15, no. 4 (December 2002): 39.

“Lightning Force,” Tilley’s Kachins aided the Marauder’s ability to distinguish native Burmese agents from the local population, as well identifying hostile villages, river crossings, jungle booby traps, and potable water sources.³¹²

The Kachin guides were a tremendous source of confidence for the young American infantrymen, who admittedly “never, if possible, moved without Kachin guides” on patrol.³¹³ Each Marauder battalion had two OSS Kachin guides assigned to serve at lead point men, while a pool of fifteen Kachins were kept in reserve at the 5307th headquarters as a regimental asset.³¹⁴ These assigned Kachins as well as Tilley’s lightning force moved continuously with Galahad while other KNOTHEAD elements were a day ahead of the main body; improving trails for the American columns utilizing pack animals, as well as conducting reconnaissance patrols and raids against Japanese positions.³¹⁵

While Stillwell’s NCAC continued its advance south at Walawbum, the Japanese 15th Army attacked across the Burmese border into India in an effort to execute a decisive victory against Slim’s 14th British Army.³¹⁶ The Japanese offensive towards Imphal created a sense of urgency for Mountbatten and Stillwell to generate pressure

³¹² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 116.

³¹³ Briscoe, “Kachin Rangers,” 39.

³¹⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 118.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 171-173.

against the Japanese rear in Burma and alleviate the momentum of the offensive.³¹⁷ Consequently, the American 1st Air Commando Group performed a glider insertion of Wingate's Chindits into the Koukkwee Valley, site of the initial A Group long range penetration, by March 11, 1944.³¹⁸ Detachment 101 saw an opportunity to support the Chindits in an area that was ethnically Kachin, and where the Americans had operational experience. Peers directed Red Maddox and the new guerrillas of TRAMP to employ the extended Kachin intelligence network that Curl had developed south of Myitkyina to support the Chindit operation as well as conduct railroad interdiction of Japanese supply lines to the Imphal front.³¹⁹ Furthermore, Peers attached a squad of Kachins to the Chindits to participate in the glider insertion and once on the ground serve as network development agents and scouts for the British special operations force.³²⁰ Peers demonstrated superb talent management by selecting Maddox to lead these combined operations with the British. Maddox, a British citizen, had great influence with the Chindits due to his nationality as well as operational experience in the Koukkwee Valley due to his participation in the A Group long range penetration.

³¹⁷ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 174.

³¹⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 173.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

³²⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 120.

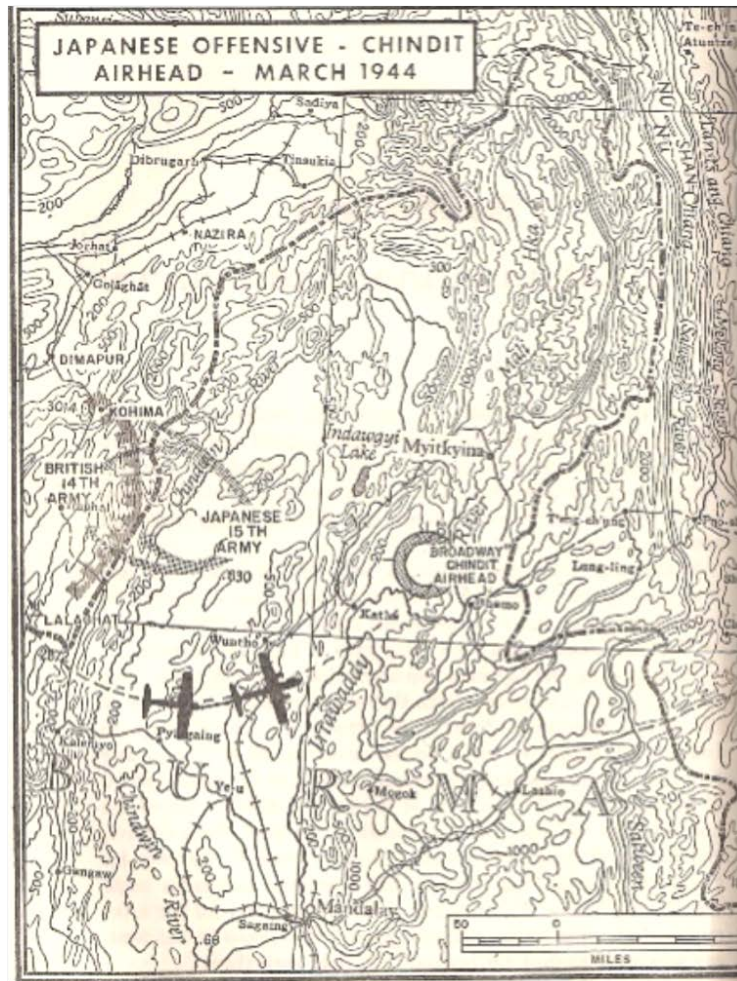


Figure 7. Imphal Offensive and Chindit's Vertical Envelopment South of Myitkyina

Source: William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 172.

With the Chindits south of Myitkyina and the Chinese divisions able to pass through Walawbum, Stillwell ordered Merrill to continue his offensive in the hopes of seizing the Jambu Bum mountain range before the monsoon season began in June 1944.³²¹ Merrill sent his second in command, Colonel Hunter to NCAC headquarters to

³²¹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 115.

develop the plans to seize the Jambu Bum range. For no other reason than what appears to be information hoarding by Merrill and other officers at the 5307th Headquarters, Hunter was unaware of Tilley's OSS force or the most up to date intelligence they provided regarding Japanese positions.³²² Consequently, Hunter misunderstood the Japanese strengths and locations and thereby agreed to Stillwell's directive to establish two separate enveloping forces despite Merrill's preference to keep Galahad consolidated. In a similar move to the Walawbum operation, the first Marauder Battalion and the 113th Chinese Regiment would envelop the Japanese defenders in Jambu Bum by establishing roadblocks to the south. However, unlike Walawbum where the entire 5307th was closely concentrated in mutually supporting positions, the 2nd and 3rd Marauders would execute an even deeper envelopment south towards Inkangahtawng.³²³ The geographically separated Marauders were susceptible to Japanese counter-attacks and consequently, they required greater support from the Kachin Rangers. On March 28, 1944, Merrill began his attack. The 2nd and 3rd Marauders launched from Detachment 101 Area III's advanced operations base at Nawbum, where Curl provided 200 guerrillas to screen the Marauder advance towards Inkangahtawng.³²⁴

³²² Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 175.

³²³ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 156.

³²⁴ Ibid.

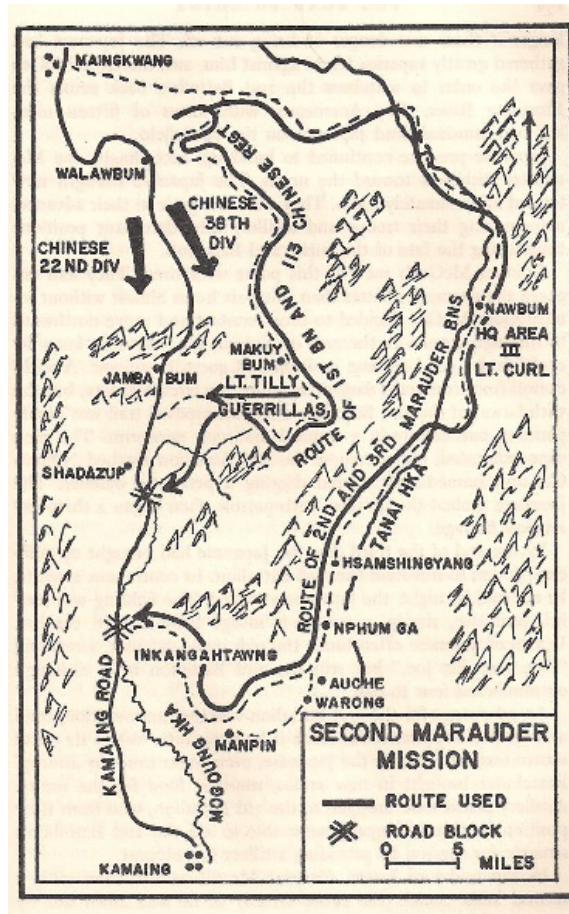


Figure 8. 5307th and Detachment 101 Support for the Seizure of Jamba Bum Range

Source: William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 157.

Despite the uplift of OSS forces, the Marauder advance towards Inkhangatwng stalled when the Japanese defenders checked the American advance. Merrill, who likely saw the stiff Japanese defense as a chance to consolidate his force, directive ordered 2nd and 3rd Marauder Battalions to Nhpum Ga and Hsamshingyang, respectively.³²⁵ The Japanese counterattacked Nhpum Ga with overwhelming force and it was the Kachin

³²⁵ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 180.

Rangers of KNOTHEAD who provided LTC McGee, the Commander of 2nd Marauders, with continuous updates regarding the Japanese direction of attack.³²⁶

As the Japanese encircled the 2nd Marauder Battalion, further north the 1st Marauder Battalion and Tilley's lightning force withdrew from their attack towards Shadazup and moved to relieve the Americans at Nphum Ga. The deep envelopment and the subsequent Japanese counterattack had left the Marauders and Detachment 101 intermixed with the enemy behind Japanese 18th Division lines. In an effort to relieve 2nd Marauders, Tilley's Kachins reconnoitered infiltration lanes for the 1st Marauder Battalion, ambushed Japanese supply columns, cut telephone lines, and intercepted Japanese radio traffic.³²⁷ Outside of the 2nd Marauder perimeter at Nhpum Ga, Father Stuart led other KNOTHEAD Kachins in similar actions. These OSS forces disrupted the enemy's ability to pinpoint the American defensive positions and created a false perception that the Marauders defended a much greater area and with much greater strength than was actually the case.³²⁸ Within a week, the 1st and 3rd Marauders as well as the Kachin Rangers began a double envelopment of the Japanese force at Nhpum Ga, forcing the Japanese retreat south on April 9, 1944.³²⁹ The Japanese who prided themselves on their superiority in jungle warfare over their European and American

³²⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 119.

³²⁷ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 159.

³²⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 119-120.

³²⁹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 117.

adversaries felt powerless as the jungle and its native peoples appeared to swallow whole formations.³³⁰

Stillwell still hoped to achieve ALBACORE's final objective, Myitkyina, by the start of the monsoon rains. NCAC had initially planned for the Chinese divisions to attack towards the airfield and Myitkyina city; however, the Chinese forces were unable to break through the Japanese 18th Division defenses. This delay as well as further frictions between Stillwell and Chiang Kai-shek forced the NCAC Commander to take a desperate gamble and employ Task Force Galahad in a lightning push across the Kumon Mountains to seize Myitkyina airfield.³³¹ However, the 5307th was decimated after the siege of Nphum Ga. Consequently, Stillwell reinforced the American unit with Chinese troops from the freshly arriving 50th Chinese Division as well as 300 Kachin Rangers from KNOTHEAD.³³²

In addition to attaching Kachin Rangers to the 5307th, Peers developed a supporting operation across three area commands to support the drive to Myitkyina. The Marauders would pass from KNOTHEAD's Area III through PAT's Area II, and finally end their operation in FORWARD's Area I. Peers realized the complexity of this operation and developed simple mission orders that ensured maximum flexibility on the ground. The Marauders as well as Kachin Rangers from KNOTHEAD would cross over multiple area commands while maintaining complete radio silence.³³³

³³⁰ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 307.

³³¹ Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers," 40.

³³² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 122.

³³³ Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers," 40.

Area III and KNOTHEAD had already provided over fifty percent of their Kachin guerrilla force in direct support of Merrill's Marauders. Peers directed Lieutenant Pamplin, now in command of KNOTHEAD after Curl's departure, to continue this support and push espionage activities further south along the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway.³³⁴ PAT's Area II was to establish passage points for Galahad's movement over the Kumon Mountain Range as well as provide Kachin scouts to ensure undetected infiltration through the operational area.³³⁵ Following successful passage of the 5307th through Area II, PAT would provide logistical support to the offensive from their field landing strip and conduct limited strikes against Japanese forces attempting to reinforce Myitkyina airfield from the north.³³⁶

Finally, FORWARD would serve as Detachment 101's main effort in the assault on Myitkyina. FORWARD's primary mission was reconnaissance, espionage, and surveillance to determine the Japanese defenses around Myitkyina. Detachment 101's unique mixture of special operations and intelligence personnel in FORWARD enabled this small element to accomplish this wide-ranging task with relative ease. Peers directed guerrillas and OSS SO personnel to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance of the airfield while SI operatives tasked agents to conduct espionage inside the city. Since FORWARD had the ability to collect information through different but supporting means, Detachment 101 would be able to provide rapid and integrated intelligence to both Stillwell and Merrill that compartmentalized SO and SI operations would have

³³⁴ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 162.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

prevented. Finally, Kachin Rangers from Area I would complete the isolation of Myitkyina Airfield by deploying nearly 1500 guerrillas to establish control over the road and trails south to Bhamo as well as conduct ambushes against Japanese troops reinforcing Myitkyina by boat on the Irrawaddy River.³³⁷

On April 25, 1944, the Marauders initiated Stillwell's attack on Myitkyina splitting into three separate columns to complete the sixty-five mile movement over the Kumon Mountains. Despite horrific conditions that resulted in the typhus deaths of numerous Marauders including Colonel Kinnison, the 3rd Battalion Commander, the force pressed on a rate of four to five miles a day over the rugged mountain peaks.³³⁸ Kachin Rangers from Area II successfully guided the American strike force through the 6,000-foot mountain ranges without enemy detection. In the most dramatic accounts of the Kachin scouts resilience, a lead scout who suffered a bite from a pit viper continued to guide the Americans from horseback all the way to the airstrip.³³⁹

Lieutenant Commander James Luce, the Naval Surgeon who had joined FORWARD in early 1943 to support civil military operations, succeeded Captain Wilkinson in command of Area I. Despite his background as a naval medical officer without any formal infantry training or advanced OSS special operations training, Luce became a natural guerrilla leader. Peers' desired end state for Detachment 101 elements was the complete isolation of Myitkyina and support as necessary to enable the Marauder assault. Consequently, Luce developed a series of diversionary operations to draw further

³³⁷ Ibid., 162-164.

³³⁸ Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers," 40.

³³⁹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 165.

Japanese attention away from the primary objective area. In early May FORWARD transitioned from purely guerrilla actions to a war of movement, clearing several villages to the east of Myitkyina.³⁴⁰ The most decisive of these conventional attacks was a Kachin assault against Sadon village (Fort Harrison) on May 15. Intended as the maximum diversionary effort shortly before Galahad's assault on the airstrip, FORWARD attacked the village with overwhelming force killing nearly 50 percent of the Japanese infantry company defending the area.³⁴¹ Luce's decision to push his Kachin Rangers into the realm of conventional infantry operations effectively fixed three Japanese battalions east of the Irawaddy River, thereby preventing potential spoiling attacks against the 5307th.³⁴²

On May 14, 1944, special reconnaissance elements from FORWARD infiltrated the Japanese perimeter around Myitkyina and discovered limited defenses around the airfield.³⁴³ In total, the Japanese defenses around the city and the airfield consisted of three understrength battalions from the 114th Japanese Regiment, 700 men in total.³⁴⁴ The Japanese were not in a defensive posture and clearly unaware of the American advance. On May 17, 1944, Galahad initiated the seizure of Myitkyina airfield achieving total surprise against the Japanese defenders.³⁴⁵ While the 2nd and 3rd Marauders

³⁴⁰ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 122.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers," 41.

³⁴⁴ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 227.

³⁴⁵ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 123.

completed the isolation of Myitkyina with support from Detachment 101, Task Force H consisting of 1st Marauders and the 150th Chinese Regiment seized the Irawaddy River ferry terminal and the airfield.³⁴⁶ The Japanese defenders were killed almost to the man, and following Stillwell's plan, the Allies began to fly in Chinese reinforcements to the Myitkyina airhead.³⁴⁷

Stillwell's gamble had worked brilliantly. The combined special operations capabilities of guerrilla forces, clandestine intelligence collection, and advanced light infantry enabled the rapid seizure of a strategic target that had threatened the aerial "hump" line of communication in China since the fall of Burma. However, exploitation of this victory was short lived. Stillwell, always cognizant of his role as a coalition commander in charge of the Chinese Army of India, determined that the honor of capturing the city should fall to the Chinese forces. Two Chinese Battalions executed a double envelopment of Myitkyina City advancing from the south and the west in a coordinated attack.³⁴⁸ However, the easy victory against the sparse defenders faltered just as the assault columns converged upon each other near the Myitkyina railway station. As dusk fell over the city, several Japanese snipers began to engage the two separate Chinese battalions inflicting severe casualties. In the ensuing chaos and darkness, the two Chinese elements mistook each other for their Japanese adversaries and began to maneuver against their fellow soldiers.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers," 41.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 166.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

The casualties of the Chinese fratricide were incorrigible and Stillwell withdrew Allied forces from the city. The Japanese exploited NCAC's disorganization and rapidly secured the town, establishing deliberate defenses in the rice paddies, dense jungles, and elephant grass fields around the city.³⁵⁰ Within a week, the Japanese had built up a force of 3,000 defenders in Myitkyina. Fortunately, for NCAC Detachment 101 guerilla activities made the size of the Myitkyina task force appear much bigger than in reality it was. Japanese defenders believed that Allied forces at the airfield and around the city numbered approximately 30,000 strong.³⁵¹ Consequently, Japanese defenders believed they lacked sufficient forces to execute an offensive that almost certainly would have annihilated the exhausted Marauders and their bludgeoned Chinese allies.³⁵²

Thus the Campaign for Myitkyina, which began as a brilliant infiltration maneuver by America's first Special Operations forces, degenerated into a two-month siege. As the monsoon rains began to fall, NCAC's attack floundered due to heavy resistance and heavy casualties. Stillwell could not afford to relieve his exhausted Marauders and employed the light infantry force in efforts to break through Japanese lines. Frank Merrill himself suffered a heart attack and could no longer command the unit while unbelievable battle casualties, fatigue, and jungle disease brought the 5307th to combat ineffective levels.³⁵³ Fighting was brutal with most Japanese defenders fighting to

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 233.

³⁵² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 166.

³⁵³ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 119.

the last man.³⁵⁴ The Allies sustained a high operational tempo despite heavy losses through a continuous stream of replacements into the airhead at Myitkyina airfield.

While conventional forces besieged Myitkyina, Detachment 101 Kachin Rangers continued to isolate the city from Japanese reinforcements. FORWARD successfully seized Sadon (Fort Harrison) on June 29 after a month and a half of fierce fighting.³⁵⁵ In addition to the capture of Sadon, FORWARD executed other conventional attacks to seize Seniku, Washang, and Kwitu Airfield, clearing all Japanese resistance east of Myitkyina to the Chinese border by August 1944.³⁵⁶ As Japanese resistance crumbled in the east and Luce seized the opportunity to begin a war of movement against the Japanese, other Area I OSS operatives continued guerrilla actions along the Irrawaddy River ambushing large formations of Japanese reinforcements.

Stillwell was cognizant of Galahad's degraded state as well as the unreliability of Chinese forces. Consequently, he came to regard Detachment 101 as an indispensable force and he directed LTC Peers to expand the number of Kachin guerrillas to 10,000.³⁵⁷ In order to accomplish this task, Peers directed Captain Quinn, the PAT Commander, to begin guerrilla actions south of Myitkyina airfield, effectively closing Area Command II.³⁵⁸ Without an operational area of their own, Kachin Rangers from PAT supported

³⁵⁴ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 167.

³⁵⁵ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 122.

³⁵⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 167.

³⁵⁷ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 125.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

Area I operations to the south of Myitkyina through sabotage and interdiction along bridges and rail lines.

Other than the ongoing fight in and to the south of Myitkyina, Detachment 101 had effectively secured its original operational areas extending north towards Fort Hertz. Peers recognized the changing dynamics of the campaign and in the midst of heavy combat reorganized the Detachment 101 command structure. FORWARD maintained its designation as Area I but Peers consolidated PAT and KNOTHEAD into Area II and re-designated TRAMP as Area III.³⁵⁹ This new command structure allowed for the logical redistribution of OSS personnel to expand guerrilla operations and intelligence activities south.

On August 2, 1944, Japanese forces withdrew across the Irrawaddy River. Detachment 101 guerrillas pursued and executed successive ambushes against the Japanese, leaving few of Myitkyina's defenders to survive the retrograde south to Bhamo.³⁶⁰ Allied forces entered the city and effectively eliminated Japanese resistance in northern Burma. The campaign for Myitkyina was over and the American NCAC was in position to support General Slim's concurrent drive into central Burma as well as intensify USAAF operations in the Pacific.³⁶¹ However, the combined offensive endured nearly six thousand casualties, over two thousand of which were Americans.³⁶² The most

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 127.

³⁶⁰ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 168.

³⁶¹ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 256.

³⁶² Ibid., 255.

battered American unit was undoubtedly Merrill's Marauders. By the end of August 1944, Stillwell disbanded the 5307th and transferred their few surviving personnel to the 475th Infantry for the establishment of a new task force.³⁶³ The Chindits equally suffered high casualties south of Myitkyina; forcing Mountbatten to withdraw the force to India.³⁶⁴ Detachment 101 was the only American or British unit to survive the Myitkyina campaign intact.

During the four-month campaign, Detachment 101 killed over 1,000 enemy troops while enduring less than fifty casualties, mostly among the Kachin guerrillas.³⁶⁵ These disproportionate effects created an unparalleled fear amongst the Japanese Army regarding the jungle warfare skills of the Kachin Rangers. Japanese prisoners of war informed Allied interrogators that Detachment 101's guerrillas created chaos in rear areas.³⁶⁶ Specifically, the threat of constant guerrilla attacks left Japanese forces on an unsustainable level of alert and slowly eroded their morale. Prisoners also stated that the Japanese feared the Kachin guerrillas so much that they rated one Kachin equal to ten Japanese.³⁶⁷ The casualty figures from the campaign certainly support this assertion.

In addition to striking fear into the enemy's heart, Detachment 101 and their Kachin Rangers won the respect of their regular army counterparts in Burma. General Merrill sent an official message to Peers thanking the OSS for its assistance and adding,

³⁶³ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 121.

³⁶⁴ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 130.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁶⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 147.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

“we could not have succeeded without the help of 101.”³⁶⁸ Colonel Hunter of the 1st Marauder battalion stated in another letter to Peers, “thanks . . . for a swell job, could not have succeeded without them.”³⁶⁹ In addition to the performance of Kachin guerrillas, Detachment 101 executed more than 100 intelligence operations throughout the campaign and handled over 350 agents.³⁷⁰ Peers estimated that these intelligence activities generated nearly 90 percent of NCAC’s total intelligence in the 1944 offensive.³⁷¹ Major General Davidson, the Commander of 10th USAAF agreed with this assessment, adding that the “OSS furnished the principal intelligence regarding Japanese troop concentrations, hostile natives, stores, and enemy movement.”³⁷² Davidson further stated that between sixty to eighty percent of all direct air support missions in Burma were based upon Detachment 101’s intelligence.³⁷³

Detachment 101 had achieved Donovan’s vision of a special warfare unit that could achieve overwhelming results in support of a conventional campaign through a combination of special operations, guerrilla warfare, and espionage activities. Donovan quickly capitalized on Detachment 101’s success in a briefing to President Roosevelt. Donovan informed the President that the OSS was responsible for collecting a majority of

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 165.

³⁶⁹ Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, 119.

³⁷⁰ Briscoe, “Kachin Rangers,” 41.

³⁷¹ Hogan, “MacArthur, Stillwell, and Special Operations in the War Against Japan,” 112.

³⁷² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 130.

³⁷³ Ibid.

the intelligence in the Chinese theater and that his vision of clandestine warfare had achieved incredible results against the Japanese as demonstrated by Burmese campaign.³⁷⁴ Roosevelt felt so strongly about this OSS success as well as the ongoing success of the Jedburgh teams in Europe that he directed Donovan to draft plans for a peacetime OSS.³⁷⁵

Ray Peers had been the commander of Detachment 101 for only ten months by the end of the Myitkyina Campaign in August 1944. Nevertheless, he had dramatically reformed the organization since Eifler's departure. Capitalizing on the influx of personnel, Peers generated a truly multi-functional special operations unit that seamlessly incorporated every branch of the OSS. Peers also demonstrated his pension for talent management by assigning the right individual to the right job, whether as a guerrilla commander or as a staff officer. Peers' re-organization of the guerrilla command structure from centralized short range penetration groups into decentralized area commands enabled the exercise of mission command and the rapid expansion of the guerrilla force to nearly the size of a division.

Just as he had demonstrated reflection in action while developing the jungle school and serving as Eifler's operations officer, Peers continually assessed and re-design the area commands mid-campaign. Consequently, Peers made sure that his subordinates were empowered with an intent that linked into Stillwell's operational design. These mission orders and an excellent liaison system enabled OSS operatives in the field to gain immediate situational understanding and coordinate actions with Marauder units faster

³⁷⁴ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 458.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

than Japanese adversaries could react. Peers' greatest contribution to Detachment 101 was creating the ability of the organization to plan, manage, and resource operations, thereby transitioning the tactically focused unit that Eifler left into a combat multiplier for the entire South East Asian Command (SEAC). This operational design capacity only added to the true strength of Detachment 101, the operatives on the ground who continued and inculcated new members into the ingenuity and results oriented culture of 1942 and 1943.

War of Movement, Infantry Action in the Shan States

Although the seizure of Myitkyina had inflicted a serious blow to Japanese morale and operational capacity in Burma, a majority of the Japanese 18th Army remained oriented against Slim's 14th Army along the Indian border. Consequently, the Allied effort to liberate Burma from the Japanese Empire was far from complete. NCAC's combat power had disintegrated in the monsoon and summer heat of the Myitkyina campaign. Consequently, Stillwell established the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional) or the Mars Task Force, from the 475th Infantry and the remnants of Merrill's Marauders.

The Mars Task Force would serve as NCAC's primary American striking power in conjunction with the Chinese Army of India. However, the Mars Task Force was severely untrained for jungle warfare and the Chinese were combat effective after Myitkyina. As the sole surviving American combat capability in Burma, Detachment 101 enabled the rapid expansion of the Mars Task Force. Peers directed the jungle school at Nazira to develop a new jungle-training center at Myitkyina that could provide two-week

courses for newly arrived infantrymen from the Mars Task Force.³⁷⁶ By September 1944, Detachment 101 Schools and Training Section had drastically reorganized its training capability by establishing twelve different camps with the necessary linguists, and graphic training aides to support Americans, Karens, Burmans, Kachins, Shanks, Thai, and female trainees.³⁷⁷ The S&T Section had continuously received best practices in the field as well as nuanced information regarding the cultural considerations of each group in Burma. The S&T section's organizational efficiency, a byproduct of Peer's initial influence over the section, enabled this rapid capability development in only a month's period.

In August 1944, Peers determined that Detachment 101 required further re-organization for future operations into south Burma just as he had after taking command and again during the conduct of the Myitkyina Campaign. Peers first established an advanced headquarters at Myitkyina Airfield to enhance mission command as well as improve liaison with NCAC. Unlike the Assam Tea Plantation in Nazira, which Eifler relished for its remote location as a way to support clandestine operations, Peers saw that Detachment 101 had become one of Stillwell's major operational maneuver force; and it required command elements located with adjacent units. A majority of administrative capabilities remained at Nazira and Detachment 101's regional branch office in Calcutta; however, Peers moved the operations and logistics forward to Myitkyina.³⁷⁸

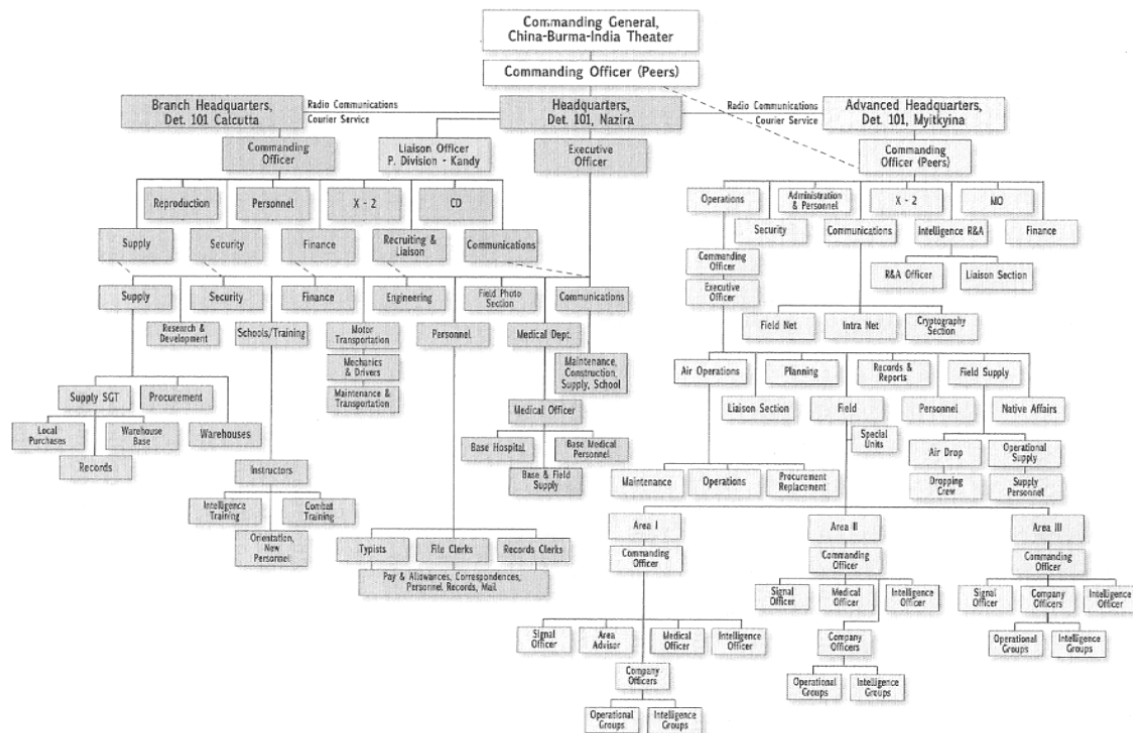
³⁷⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 147.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, XII.

Coupled with the recent changes to consolidate guerrilla forces into three area commands, the Detachment 101 organization of late 1944 was the high water mark of OSS operations in the Far East. Detachment 101's core members had three years of experimenting with the right mixture of various OSS branches in consolidated field units. Additionally, Detachment 101 began to receive several replacements who were OSS veterans from the European Theater as well as several members of Merrill's Marauders who volunteered to join Detachment 101 rather than the Mars Task Force.³⁷⁹ Detachment 101 became a free market exchange for the best techniques in jungle warfare, clandestine intelligence activities, and guerrilla operations. The wide variance of operational ideas found potential employment in the Burma due to Peers' emphasis on decentralized operations, mission orders, and efficient staff organization.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 131, 146.



Detachment 101 organization, November 1944

Figure 9. Detachment 101 Organization late 1944

Source: Troy Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013), XII.

Far from the Burmese jungles in central China, the Japanese mounted an operation aimed at the destruction of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Chinese force as well as the capture of American airfields in south China.³⁸⁰ This operation, designated ICHIGO, began along a single axis of attack that aimed to create a land route between Japanese territory in Manchuria and Indochina. After completing this operational objective, the Japanese would isolate and summarily defeat the Chinese Nationalists

³⁸⁰ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Stillwell's Command Problems*, 319.

while destroying American airfields that had inflicted tremendous damage on the Japanese home islands.

Japanese forces were highly successful in achieving their initial objectives and by June 1944, they were on the verge of completely encircling Chiang Kai-shek and Claire Chennault's 14th Air Force. Chennault lodged his concerns to his commander, General Stillwell, as well as the Joint Chiefs in Washington while Chiang Kai-shek directly contacted President Roosevelt. Nevertheless, the American general remained dismissive and unconcerned. Stillwell's continuously deteriorating relationship with Chiang Kai-shek and Chennault left him detached from the Chinese theater and openly skeptical of the severity of the Chinese strategic situation.³⁸¹ Furthermore, even though Stillwell continued to serve as the Chief of Staff to the Chinese Army, events in Burma consumed far more of his time as the NCAC commander. Stillwell felt Chiang Kai-shek and Chennault were to blame for the inability to hold the Japanese offensive in check due to their over reliance on air power and the Chinese leader's woeful disregard of Stillwell's advice for improving the Chinese Army.³⁸²

The disagreement between Stillwell and Chiang Kai-shek in the spring of 1944 was fundamentally an argument about resource prioritization. Against this backdrop was a similar argument across the Allies' entire strategic spectrum. In June 1944, the entire CBI hung in the balance as Stillwell's attack on Myitkyina, Slim's defense at Imphal, and the Japanese ICHIGO remained undecided. Likewise, at the strategic level the entire Allied war effort remained locked in a decisive battle as the Normandy landings, the

³⁸¹ Ibid., 367.

³⁸² Ibid.

liberation of Rome, and the Battle of the Philippine Sea dominated the Combined Chiefs of Staff's strategic focus. Stillwell's argument that he required more resources than the Chinese engaged in ICHIGO failed to counter Washington's desire to appease Chiang Kai-shek and keep the Chinese in the war.³⁸³ The argument over resource management in the CBI was only the beginning of political fallout.

Stillwell traditionally found that his close relationship with Roosevelt and George Marshal provided ample political cover when Chiang Kai-shek had petitioned for his removal in the past. However, when Vice President of the United States Henry Wallace visited China late June 1944 Stillwell was still in Burma. Consequently, Chenault and the Chinese Generalissimo dominated the conversation, drawing the Vice President's recommendation to terminate Stillwell's command.³⁸⁴ Despite a growing number of political opponents in Washington, Stillwell survived for several months, mostly due to the success of his campaign in Burma. In fact, George Marshal determined after discussions with Lord Mountbatten that Stillwell should receive a promotion to Command the Chinese Army in order to blunt the advance of ICHIGO.³⁸⁵

In July 1944 at Roosevelt's request Chiang Kai-shek grudgingly agreed to this promotion but later demanded Stillwell's recall, citing his continued inability to advise the Chinese Army in the role of Chief of Staff.³⁸⁶ With the loss of American air bases in

³⁸³ Ibid., 368.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 375.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 381-383.

³⁸⁶ Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Time Runs out in CBI* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History United States Army, 1999), 4.

south China and continued pressure from the Chinese leader, Roosevelt relented and relieved Stillwell on October 19, 1944. The Joint Chiefs of Staff separated the CBI into two separate theaters, keeping NCAC in the British SEAC and creating a separate theater for all of China. Lieutenant General Daniel Sultan replaced Stillwell as the NCAC commander and all US forces in Burma-India and Major General Wedemeyer assumed command of US efforts in China.³⁸⁷

Stillwell's relief came as a shock to the operatives of Detachment 101. Like Bill Donovan, Stillwell was one of Detachment 101's greatest supporters. Despite his initial reluctance to take in the OSS, Stillwell came to admire the special operations unit and their Kachin guerrillas. In many ways, Detachment 101 was successful because of the latitude that Stillwell gave them throughout his command. Joseph Stillwell was without a doubt the only theater commander to employ special operations forces to such overwhelming consequence. Peers and his staff officers felt concerned that Sultan, who had little knowledge of the Kachin's exploits, would summarily disregard special operations and discontinue his support for the unit.³⁸⁸

Once again, General Donovan came to the aid of his pet project to ensure Detachment 101 enjoyed the full support of the NCAC commander. After meeting Ray Peers and John Coughlin in New Delhi to collect statistical data and the latest operational information regarding OSS actions in Burma-India, Donovan continued on to Myitkyina Airfield for a high-level meeting with allied commanders.³⁸⁹ Donovan, Mountbatten,

³⁸⁷ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 367.

³⁸⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 179.

³⁸⁹ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 461.

Sultan, and Wedemeyer discussed the ongoing collapse of Chinese forces in the wake of ICHIGO as well as the next phase of the campaign in Burma. The commanders agreed that the remaining Chinese Divisions under Sultan's NCAC should return to counter the Japanese offensive in central China as soon as Slim had successfully seized Lashio and Mandalay.³⁹⁰ Furthermore, the remaining phases of the Burma campaign would proceed with the fewest number of Chinese forces possible and as such, the American-Kachin Rangers would have to increase their conventional operations to support the victory drive to Rangoon.³⁹¹ Sultan followed up this meeting with an official visit to Detachment 101 headquarters where he complemented past OSS efforts and directed Peers to continue operations as he had done under Stillwell.³⁹²

As Sultan took command, NCAC returned on the offensive in October 1944. The Mars Task Force joined the British 36th and Chinese 50th, 22nd, and 30th Divisions in their attack south towards Bhamo. Just as they had done in the Myitkyina Campaign, Detachment 101 screened far ahead of conventional allied forces and conducted espionage to determine the Japanese positions and intentions. However, the nature of Detachment 101's actions became less guerrilla and more light infantry as the unit moved south and Japanese resistance weakened.³⁹³ On December 15, 1944, Sultan's forces captured Bhamo and Peers again determined that his forward headquarters was too far to sustain the aerial resupply of forward elements with personnel and logistics. Five miles

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 179.

³⁹³ Ibid., 181.

south of Bhamo Peers selected a small airstrip and an adjacent Shan village to move the forward headquarters from Myitkyina.³⁹⁴

For the first time since the Long Range Penetrations of 1943, Detachment 101 had returned to the Shan States. During these ill-fated operations in the past, the Shans were sympathizers with the Japanese. However, the Allied successes of 1944 had changed that attitude and large numbers of formerly hostile ethnicities, to include the Shans and the Burmese, were eager to join the guerrilla forces of Detachment 101.³⁹⁵ Detachment 101 initially welcomed these new recruits since they were natives and would provide the requisite knowledge of local terrain and customs just as the Kachins had provided in Northern Burma. However, the age-old rivalry between the Kachins and the Burmese became apparent with open conflict erupting in mixed guerrilla units.³⁹⁶

In addition to ethnic tensions that OSS operatives had yet to encounter, the Kachins began to request discharge from American service because of their location in Burma. As the Kachins moved from their native areas into the Shan states, OSS officers noted a growing unwillingness to engage in combat with the Japanese. The prevailing attitude of the Kachins began to indicate that they wished to go home and that the Shans should fight for their own country.³⁹⁷ The terrain in the Shan states also presented a drastically new set of problems for Detachment 101. As the unit left the jungles and mountains of the Kachin State and entered the open hills and fields of the Shan State, the

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 182.

³⁹⁵ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 179.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 181.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

Japanese advantages in firepower inflicted high casualties on the guerrilla force.³⁹⁸ The combination of open terrain, ethnic tensions, new recruits, and an increased emphasis on conventional tactics resulted in higher casualty rates in the Shan States than any other time.

The Shans and the Chins were far from the Kachin warrior culture, which the OSS had come to expect. OSS operatives were surprised by the large numbers of Shan guerrillas who would desert within a few days of their recruitment. Detachment 101's advance through the Shan states received a steadily increasing number of American and Kachin casualties due to the reciprocal expansion and contraction of hundreds of personnel in guerrilla battalions.³⁹⁹ The SOE turnover of Indian agents in 1942 and the rapid recruitment of Kachin natives in 1943 prevented Detachment 101 from experiencing the inherent difficulty in recruiting and vetting guerrilla forces in a contested area. Former FORWARD group commander, William Wilkinson, wrote that Detachment 101 experienced few difficulties in recruiting the Kachins due to their extreme disdain for the Japanese as well as their proficiency in weapons and jungle craft.⁴⁰⁰ This viewpoint was commonplace throughout the unit, and American personnel had blindly come to expect high levels of loyalty and expertise in their indigenous partners. Successful experiences from the past failed to provide lessons learned for recruiting and employing less motivated ethnicities. Nevertheless, as a model learning organization Detachment 101 developed new solutions to these problems as they

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁰⁰ Wilkinson, "Problems of Guerrilla Leader," 26.

continued operations. Capitalizing on the experiences of OSS veterans from Europe, Detachment 101 began to develop screening criteria for potential Shan candidates and employed recruitment patrols with embedded X-2 (counter intelligence) officers to vet the best possible guerrilla candidates.⁴⁰¹

Detachment 101 also developed a new combat formation at the smallest organizational level to improve native guerrilla performance in more conventional light infantry tactics. Kachin Rangers had been in the past highly independent and operated well without direct American supervision. However, the increase of questionably motivated local Shans forced Detachment 101 operatives to change their advisory approach and establish small combat teams. Small combat teams would take advantage of a growing influx of OSS personnel from OG branch to expand the ratio of American advisors to counter the shortcomings of partnered forces.⁴⁰² These small teams consisted of an American officer or NCO as well as approximately ten indigenous guerrillas of pure Kachin or Burmese ethnicity.⁴⁰³ American operatives took greater risks than they had in the past by directly leading their indigenous troops in infantry action, but the efforts held the multi-ethnic guerrilla army together.

Unlike the Myitkyina campaign where Detachment 101 enabled the infiltration of American light infantry through hostile lines and conducted rear area attacks to keep the Japanese off balance, Detachment 101's actions in the Shan Campaign resembled the infiltration tactics of light infantry. The OSS guerrilla army served as a first wave

⁴⁰¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 188.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 178.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

infantry force moving as fast as possible towards rear areas through defensive weak points while larger conventional forces defeated isolated strongpoints in detail. By February 1945, the Detachment had begun to probe Lashio with an army of 6,500 guerrillas organized into nine battalions.⁴⁰⁴ The Japanese continued to delay the advancing NCAC offensive, but with overwhelming numbers, allied victory was only a matter of time.

A prime example of the conventional warfare that Detachment 101 found itself conducting occurred on 26 February just to the north of Lashio when four Kachin Ranger companies held off a Japanese regimental assault for three days in a traditional perimeter defense.⁴⁰⁵ The need to seize and hold terrain marked a vastly different organizational mindset than the hit and run tactics of 1943-1944. The coup de main occurred on March 3, 1945 when the Kachin Rangers initiated a three battalion attack against Lashio to seize the airfield and the railroad station. After three days of heavy urban fighting, Detachment 101 had secured its objectives and awaited the arrival of follow on Chinese forces.⁴⁰⁶ Sultan presented Chinese forces with the honor of capturing the city and on March 7, 1945 Lashio fell to the Allies.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 418.

⁴⁰⁵ Romanus and Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater Time Runs out in CBI*, 227.

⁴⁰⁶ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 418.

⁴⁰⁷ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 187.

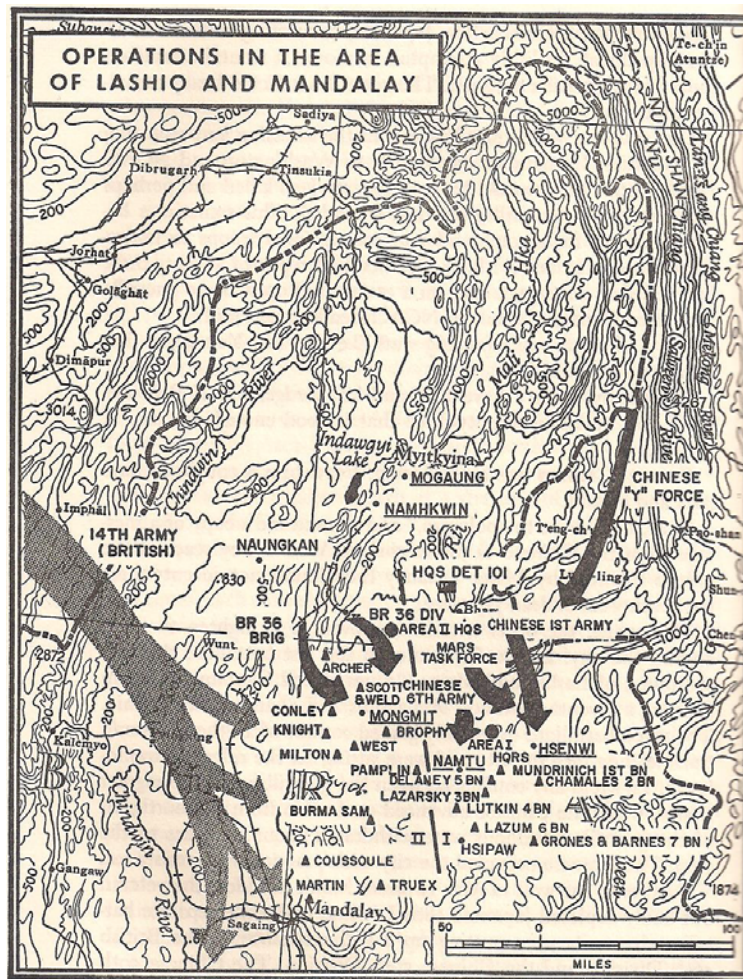


Figure 10. Kachin Ranger Area Commands and Allied Advances towards Mandalay

Source: William Peers, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1963), 186.

By March 20, 1945 General Slim's 14th British Army had seized Mandalay, marking the decline of Japanese supremacy in Burma. However, just as they had in every other theater of the Second World War, the Japanese continued resistance to the bitter end. Following the Allied capture of Mandalay and Lashio, NCAC withdrew the Mars Task Force and a majority of the Chinese Army of India to return to central China and

combat the ongoing Japanese ICHIGO offensive.⁴⁰⁸ General Sultan had initially advised Detachment 101 should disband the guerrilla force when reaching the Lashio-Mandalay line.⁴⁰⁹ The Kachins were more than willing to disband at this point, with some of the individuals originating nearly three hundred miles to the north where the short range penetrations had initially recruited.⁴¹⁰

Detachment 101 began a textbook demobilization that capitalized on a robust indigenous personnel records system initiated in 1942 when Peers oversaw the jungle school. Detachment 101 processed awards and pay for the demobilized guerrillas as well as civil military integration programs based on recorded performances throughout the campaign.⁴¹¹ Following the deactivation of the Kachin Rangers, Peers planned to move Detachment 101 to China to support other OSS initiatives, however, Lord Mountbatten disagreed with the loss of NCAC's combat power with so much of Burma yet to be secured.⁴¹² Unknown to Peers, SEAC and NCAC had developed plans for Detachment 101; the ongoing demobilization was a premature act that would rob the OSS of veteran guerrillas for a final drive south.

Following Mountbatten's guidance, Sultan informed Donovan and John Coughlin that he intended to keep Detachment 101 in Burma to clear the remaining Shan States of

⁴⁰⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 204.

⁴⁰⁹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 191.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 191-192.

⁴¹² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 204.

Japanese troops.⁴¹³ NCAC believed that 5,000 to 6,000 troops from the 56th Japanese Division near Hsipaw-Maymyo would cover the Japanese withdrawal from Rangoon and regroup for a future counterattack.⁴¹⁴ Sultan instructed Peers to use the Kachin Rangers to disintegrate the Japanese force and cut off their escape route into Thailand.⁴¹⁵ Prior to March 1945, this task would have been difficult but still well within the means of Detachment 101's capabilities. However, the order to disband the Kachin Rangers cut the OSS surrogate force by two thirds. Peers refused to force any Kachin who had already been discharged back into service. Instead he ordered two OSS officers, Robert Delaney and Dow Grones, to delay demobilization of their Kachin Battalions and called upon guerrilla volunteers to stay on for the final offensive south.⁴¹⁶ Those who volunteered to stay were consolidated into new battalions with recently recruited Shans and Burmese. In April 1945, Detachment 101 encountered pockets of ethnic Karens who, like the Kachins, were fervently anti-Japanese and predisposed towards military service due to their pre-conflict relationship with the British.⁴¹⁷ A combination of luck and organizational resourcefulness enabled the Americans to salvage enough combat power to continue operations despite mass demobilization of Kachin fighters.

Initial actions south of Mandalay also demonstrated that the campaign to the Thai border would be a vast departure from previous actions. Detachment 101 no longer

⁴¹³ Ibid., 205.

⁴¹⁴ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 430.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 206.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

operated in a supporting role to conventional formations and consequently could not rely upon NCAC's superiority in firepower when directly attacking the Japanese. As NCAC's only maneuver element, Detachment 101 and its guerrilla force would have to fight as conventional infantry more than any other point in the war. Peers recognized the potential risks with continued infantry assaults based upon the high casualties absorbed in the campaign towards Lashio. Consequently, Peers met with the most experienced OSS operatives and Kachin guerrilla leaders to determine the proper mix of tactics for the task. The consensus was to create a mixed approach of conventional and unconventional tactics.⁴¹⁸ Peers decided not to prescribe which tactics each subordinate element should employ. Instead, he used mission orders to pass his objectives while providing maximum freedom for each unit commander to develop the tactics and techniques that were appropriate for their area of operations.⁴¹⁹ Despite Sultan's initial estimate of 5,000 to 6,000 enemy troops south of Maymyoy, the Japanese force in reality consisted of 10,000 troops.⁴²⁰ Detachment 101's four remaining guerrilla battalions advanced south along four separate axes of advance to cut the Japanese escape route to Thailand and seize the city of Taunggyi.⁴²¹

Generally, each of the four Detachment 101 battalions operated under the principles agreed upon by Peers and other senior Detachment leadership. Half of the

⁴¹⁸ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 194.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴²⁰ Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines With the OSS in Burma*, 431.

⁴²¹ Hale Knight, *The Operations of a Guerrilla Company (OSS DET 101) at Lawksawk, Burma* (Ft. Benning, GA: United States Army Infantry School Donovan Research Library, 1948), 11.

force would operate as light infantry attacking Japanese positions with conventional assault tactics while the other half would operate twenty to thirty miles forward of the main battle area as guerrillas, harassing enemy lines of communication and interdicting reinforcements.⁴²² The 3rd Guerrilla Battalion, under the command of Red Maddox endured the heaviest fighting during this last phase of the war and bore the greatest brunt of traditional infantry missions. As an original member of the A Group Long Range Penetration Team, a member of KNOTHEAD under Vincent Curl, and finally the Area IV TRAMP Commander, Red Maddox was one of the most experienced operatives in Detachment 101. Peers again demonstrated his ability to select the right person for the right position by placing his most experienced commander in arguably the most difficult position of the unit's history. Peers cited that the Kachin Rangers were only successful in the last campaign due to the competence and skill of these battalion commanders.⁴²³

In a furious action against Japanese forces at Lawksawk, site of the disastrous B Group Long Range Penetration, Maddox demonstrated his ability to employ both conventional and unconventional tactics while manipulating the Japanese enemy that he had over three years' experience fighting. On May 6, 1945, Maddox used two companies in a forward guerrilla role while two other companies conducted a feint to draw enemy forces into a Kachin Ranger engagement zone.⁴²⁴ The Japanese, who were always willing to seize the offensive, relished the opportunity to fight the elusive Kachin guerrillas in a

⁴²² Ibid., 10.

⁴²³ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 195.

⁴²⁴ Knight, *The Operations of a Guerrilla Company (OSS DET 101) at Lawksawk, Burma*, 11.

conventional battle. Pride and vengeance had drawn the Japanese into the OSS trap. Maddox's battalion held off numerous Japanese suicide attacks but endured heavy casualties. One of the guerrilla company commanders, CPT Hamp Knight, blamed the casualties on NCAC's decision to employ the Kachin Rangers as conventional infantry stating, "Guerrilla troops should be employed as such" and the "[tactics] were not those which our troops were proficient at."⁴²⁵

Despite heavy casualties, Detachment 101 continued south with heavy air support from the 10th Air Force. Kachin Rangers conducted a ten-day siege against Loilem in June, but the fierce Japanese defense forced the Detachment to discontinue the attack and rely on prolonged aerial bombardment to break enemy resistance.⁴²⁶ Detachment 101 finally secured Loilem and the guerrillas' last contact with Japanese forces occurred on June 25, 1945.⁴²⁷ The following week, NCAC and OSS headquarters published an order to de-activate Detachment 101. Detachment 101 had seen America's involvement in the Burmese theater from start to finish. However, the organization was not the unstoppable division size force from six months prior. The final campaign to Lawksawk and Loilem had exhausted the Americans and their indigenous troops. Peers recalled that his men were physically and mentally broken; continued operations would have been impossible if the Japanese had not surrendered.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 210.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Demobilization continued and Peers arranged for the British Civil Affairs Service to recruit police forces from Detachment 101 guerrillas.⁴²⁹ Back in Washington, Donovan's OSS lasted only two months longer than his Burmese experiment in unconventional warfare. The newly inaugurated President Truman told Donovan that the "OSS belongs to a nation at war; it can have no place in an America at peace."⁴³⁰ Donovan's hopes for a long standing American espionage and special operations organization faltered in the forthcoming peace dividend. Despite the bitter end of the OSS, their actions in Burma were not forgotten. General Sultan recommended Detachment 101 for a presidential unit citation covering the final Campaign to the Thai border. The citation provides all the necessary information to cover the tremendous accomplishments of the final battles in the Burma Theater.

"Kachin Rangers were equipped with nothing heavier than mortars and had to rely entirely upon air-dropped supplies . . . Americans of Detachment No. 101 displayed extraordinary heroism in leading their coordinated battalions of 3,200 natives to complete victory against an overwhelming force . . . [routing] 10,000 Japanese throughout an area of 10,000 square miles."⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Dunlop, *Donovan America's Master Spy*, 468.

⁴³¹ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 208.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Detachment 101 Legacy

In front of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Headquarters at Fort Bragg, North Carolina is a memorial plaza that marks the short but storied legacy of America's Special Operations Forces. In this plaza, carved stones list Army Special Operations units since the Second World War. Among those units that served in the Second World War are the famed 1st Special Service Force, the Army Ranger Battalions, Merrill's Marauders, the OSS Operational Groups, the OSS Jedburghs, and OSS Detachment 101. Although each of these units defied conventional wisdom and broke through layers of institutional bureaucracy to develop America's initial special warfare and surgical strike capabilities, Detachment 101 stands alone from these other organizations due to its hybrid nature and its breadth of influence during the Second World War.

Hundreds of miles to north in the original entrance lobby of the George Bush Center for Intelligence in Langley, Virginia a statue of General Bill Donovan overlooks employees of the Central Intelligence Agency. These two markers in front of two vastly different organizations attest to their shared predecessor, the half-military and half-civilian Office of Strategic Services. The Central Intelligence Agency obviously traces its lineage to the intelligence activities of the OSS and to a lesser extent, its limited paramilitary functions. Conversely, the US Army Special Forces trace their lineage to the branches of the "strategic services" directorate, including the operational groups, morale operations, and special operations. However, time has left the progeny of the OSS at

vastly different points from where they started. Fifty years of divergent organizational development between the CIA and Special Operations Forces have created an environment of budgetary competition and operational turf wars. Modern day operations, which in the Second World War would have had fallen under the complete oversight of the OSS, degenerate into a Title 10 versus Title 50 debate regarding which organization has the authority to conduct which action.

Despite the clear public distinction between US Special Operations Forces and the Intelligence Community that exists in the present day, both originated from the vision of Bill Donovan and the unprecedented organization of the OSS. Donovan's vision was to develop an American intelligence agency equal to the British Secret Service while at the same time creating a special operations capability that could conduct guerrilla action and political warfare to indirectly weaken America's adversaries in a discreet and scalable manner. To this effort, Detachment 101 was unique even within the OSS since it combined these two primary functions and their subordinate branches to create a truly unique organization that could achieve greater effects than any sole OSS activity. No other unit or branch in the OSS came as close to Detachment 101 in realizing Donovan's vision for a new form of American Warfare. Furthermore, no other organization since the OSS, with the exception of MAC-V-SOG in the Vietnam War, has created such a unified effort in the complimentary but often competing activities of espionage and special warfare. In fact, the close cooperation between the CIA and US Special Operations Forces in the Vietnam War is likely a consequence of the close personal relationships that senior leaders established during their junior days in the OSS.

Although many special operations units from the Second World War achieved incredible results in their respective theaters of action, only Detachment 101 developed the capability and influence to become a mission critical organization.⁴³² By the end of the Burmese Campaign, Detachment 101 was the only remaining American combat unit available to General Sultan. The transformation of Detachment 101 from a tactical unit focused on sabotage and high profile raids to a major maneuver force conducting campaign level operations is a tremendous example of organizational adaptability. Although some factors of chance influenced the development of the unit, most of Detachment 101's decisions to adapt to environmental changes were by intentional design. Fundamentally, a narrative that depicts desperate American soldiers and their primitive band of tribal warriors forced by the limited resources of the CBI Theater to accomplish more with less fails to provide the OSS operatives of Detachment 101 with the accolades they deserve.

The OSS Detachment 101 grew from an organization composed of a mere twenty personnel to a force numbering nearly 1,000 American operatives and 10,000 indigenous guerrillas.⁴³³ As the following chart displays, the measures of performance for Kachin Ranger operations from 1943 to 1945 list a tremendous quantitative impact upon Japanese forces in Burma.

⁴³² Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 222.

⁴³³ Ibid.

Table 1. Detachment 101 Measures of Performance
in the Burma Campaign

Critical Action	Measure of Performance
Airmen rescued	232
Allied personnel rescued	342
Known EKIA	5447
Estimated EWIA	10,000
Enemy Captured	64
Bridges Destroyed	51
Railroad Trains Destroyed	9
Supplies destroyed (est)	2,000 tons
Supplies captured (est)	500 tons
Intelligence furnished to NCAC	90%
Terminal Guidance Operations ISO USAAF	65%
EKIA from TGO for AI/CAS	11,225
EWIA from TGO for AI/CAS	885

Source: Troy Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 222.

However, the measures of effectiveness truly indicate the impact that Detachment 101 had in support of NCAC in the Burmese Campaign. As the ultimate example of a force multiplier, Detachment 101 conducted a persistent guerrilla campaign that fixed nearly three Japanese Divisions in Northern Burma, thereby blunting further enemy advances into British India and creating the necessary conditions that enabled both conventional and unconventional Allied forces to regain the initiative. The deep sabotage

campaign and intelligence enabled terminal guidance operations (TGO) supported US Army Air Force efforts to degrade Japanese air capacity in Northern Burma. Coupled with the eventual seizure of Myitkyina Airfield, Detachment 101 directly supported US efforts to maintain an airline of communication into China, keeping an important ally in the war and further preventing the re-deployment of an incredible number of Japanese combat troops to counter the American advance in the Pacific. Third, the vast reconnaissance patrols and espionage networks of Detachment 101 provided both NCAC and SEAC with unparalleled fidelity on Japanese force composition and disposition. This intelligence capacity enabled Allied forces to out maneuver their Japanese opponents despite severe operational disadvantages. Finally, Detachment 101 broke the myth of Japanese superiority in jungle warfare. By the end of the conflict, the Japanese defenders felt unable to overcome the seemingly endless attrition that the American Kachin Rangers and their greatest weapon, the jungle, could inflict.

Critical Analysis of Detachment 101's Organizational Adaptability

The most critical factor that enabled Detachment 101's success against Japanese forces was their ability to assess and adapt to changes in their operational environment. This level of cognitive skill, referred to as the OODA (observe, orient, decide, act) loop or the Boyd Cycle in military circles, appeared consistently at both the individual and organizational level of the unit. OSS Detachment 101 defeated Japanese forces in Burma by evolving into a learning organization that could rapidly adapt to changing environments and intuitively design operational solutions in action. This adaptability and intuitive approach to problem solving enabled the accomplishment of three critical

actions ultimately responsible for Detachment 101's success. First, a combination of individual initiative and organizational adaptability enabled the successful assessment, integration with, and employment of a highly capable indigenous partner force. Next, the evolution as a learning organization enabled the development of a campaign planning capability that could link small unit decentralized actions to higher strategic objectives. Finally, Detachment 101's culture of learning encouraged the development of a liaison network that could ensure SOF-CF interdependence and achieve strategic level influence within the US Government.

The above-mentioned critical actions were the direct methods in which Detachment 101 achieved success in Burma. However, these actions were only possible due to a series of circumstances and organizational efforts to create what is now referred to as learning organization. Consequently, in order to understand how the American Kachin Rangers were able to achieve these critical actions it is necessary to first analyze how this diverse organization evolved from a narrowly focused unit obsessed with strategic sabotage to become a learning organization capable of operational level campaigns. A subtle combination of the right personnel, unit culture, operational freedom, and leadership created the necessary conditions to become a learning organization.

Carey Walker and Matthew Bonnot from the United States Army Command and General Staff College define a learning organization as a formation that "fosters a culture of learning that solves problems and improves the organization through a supportive command climate, valuing member involvement in the gaining of knowledge, skills, and

processes to modify behavior and get results.”⁴³⁴ Walker and Bonnot go on to state that the requisite characteristics for a successful learning organization are a culture of learning, a supportive command climate, member involvement, and the ability overcome the learning paradox.⁴³⁵ Edgar Schein adds several additional characteristics for a learning organization in his work, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, that are applicable to Detachment 101’s transformation over the course of the Second World War. These characteristics include proactivity, commitment to pragmatic truth, open and task relevant communications, and the value of cultural understanding.⁴³⁶

In the 1940s, the concept of a learning organization did not formally exist, but a similar idea had already existed for quite some time as an existing military principle. The root concept for military units to behave as learning organizations began in the mid-19th Century. As Chief of the Prussian General Staff, Helmut Von Moltke the Elder developed the principle of *Auftragstaktik* to stress decentralized initiative within the overall strategic design.⁴³⁷ This principle of mission tactics, later referred to as mission orders, served as a means to counter the fog of war and the probability of chance that Carl von Clausewitz had identified as a constant in warfare. The United States Army has espoused the use of

⁴³⁴ Carey Walker and Matthew Bonnot, “Improving While Operating: The Paradox of Learning,” United States Army Command and General Staff College, August 2014, 4.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

⁴³⁶ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, July 2010), 365-370.

⁴³⁷ Gunther Rothenburg, “Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Encirclement,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press, 1986), 344.

mission orders since before the Second World War and both Eifler and Peers were well exposed to the concept. The 1939 version of Field Manual 100-5 stated that mission orders should “not trespass upon the province of a subordinate” and “must be adapted to the circumstances under which it will be received and executed.”⁴³⁸

In modern Army doctrine, mission orders continue to exist in the philosophy of mission command. ADRP 6-0 outlines the principles of mission command to include building cohesive teams through mutual trust, creating shared understanding, providing clear commander’s intent, exercising disciplined initiative, using mission orders, and accepting prudent risk.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, mission command provides a high advantage of adaptability in fluid environments by enabling freedom of action and reducing the amount of certainty required for action.⁴⁴⁰ These principles and objectives of mission command closely mirror the characteristics of learning organizations outlined by Walker, Bonnot, and Schein.

Mission command is the first essential component for a military organization to become a learning organization. In the case of Detachment 101, these values were indispensable to both senior and junior leaders. Peers summarized the significance of this leadership philosophy when describing the freedom of action that General Stillwell and General Sultan provided as a source of success. “Mission orders [left] planning, direction, and operation entirely to the unit . . . to fully employ the imagination and ingenuity of

⁴³⁸ United States Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 2-4.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-1.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

every officer and enlisted man.” In order for a unit to employ mission command, subordinates must demonstrate individual initiative enabled by competency and self-discipline. These traits were almost universal for the hand selected and psychologically screened men of Detachment 101. Furthermore, these traits were embedded from the unit’s inception during initial training under the SOE, where resourcefulness and ingenuity were the most valuable skills an operative could possess. As the war progressed, the leadership of Eifler and Peers reinforced these values and emphasized their importance to subordinates. Consequently, individual commanders such as Wilkinson, Maddox, Luce, and Hale were able to adapt to changes in their areas of operation to ensure maximum results with little guidance from higher and limited means to control their indigenous forces.

Throughout the Burmese Campaign, trust and empowerment of subordinates was a constant ideal in Detachment 101. Since the CO/OSS lacked a formal accession system or career progression model when Goodfellow and Donovan created the unit in 1942, they were able to hand pick individuals in whom they had the confidence to accomplish any mission with a wide degree of operational latitude. In the case of Carl Eifler, this latitude extended to General Stillwell and enabled Detachment 101 to hold tremendous political influence in both the OSS and NCAC headquarters. After Eifler’s relief, Peers continued to build upon this initial success in order to solidify Detachment 101’s reputation as the most capable OSS unit in the entire Second World War.⁴⁴¹

Eifler and Peers extended the same degree of trust and confidence, a critical requirement for a learning organization, to each agent team leader, guerrilla leader, or

⁴⁴¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 222.

area commander throughout the organization. Peers described his command philosophy as an effort to “give the commanders maximum latitude, and not handicap them with a hopeless amount of minutiae.”⁴⁴² Due to the close relationships established in pre-war military service as well as their collective training under the SOE, the original operatives of Detachment 101 established mutual trust from the beginning of the conflict. As time passed, purposeful talent management such as Vincent Curl’s command of KNOTHEAD to conduct link up with Zhing Htaw Naw or the assignment of Red Maddox to command former British military personnel in TRAMP ensured that Detachment 101’s leadership could trust subordinate decision making in the field. Detachment 101’s incremental expansion enabled the core set of twenty personnel to develop an initial operating system based upon collective trust. As the unit absorbed new personnel, it inculcated these values through cultural emersion to permeate the entire thousand-man force.

Pre-war personal relationships and training also established a collective approach to operational problem solving among Detachment 101’s core operatives. Initially, this approach was based on British SOE paradigms taught at B Camp and Camp X. However, these approaches failed to achieve the expected results in early 1943 and the unit would have to modify its actions in order to achieve success. Unprecedented operational freedom and pressure to generate results from both Donovan and Stillwell forced the Kachin Rangers to experiment with any potential operational technique, reinforce those that worked, discard failed constructs, and spread the best ideas throughout the force. Without any doctrine to fall back upon, OSS operatives developed their solutions as operations progressed through reflection in action.

⁴⁴² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 139.

As practitioners of design methodology in its purest form, Detachment 101 members became accustomed to changing their operational approaches without approval or directive from higher elements. As the unit expanded, this idea of rapid evolution matriculated to every soldier, civilian, and indigenous agent. Supporting this experimentation in the culture of learning was a lessons learned system exemplified by the murder boards and after action reviews that each OSS operative and indigenous agent became accustomed to in the jungle school. The only major example of Detachment 101 failing to rapidly learn from a mistake and discontinue such actions was the failed long range penetrations of 1943. In all other actions Detachment 101 continuously demonstrated itself to be an organization that valued self-improvement and rarely accepted the status quo. Continuous after action reviews from short range penetrations, steady improvements in the interoperability with Merrill's Marauders and later the Mars Task Force, the development of hybrid tactics in the Shan states, and continuous structural re-organizations all demonstrate this tangible energy of self-improvement.

Peer's summarized the culture of learning that permeated Detachment 101 in his assessment of the unit's development over time. "Personnel forming the nucleus of the detachment had been well trained and had excellent military backgrounds, but none of them had ever participated in guerrilla operations or were familiar with this part of the world. Consequently, the initial operations were based necessarily upon trial and error in order to convert the principals of guerrilla operations, as taught in the OSS schools in the United States, to actual techniques that would be applicable to this area. Records were maintained down to the smallest detail, and on completion, the operation was studied and

analyzed to determine its strong points and its weaknesses. Good points were incorporated in unit training, while weaknesses or errors were corrected.”⁴⁴³

The steady development of Detachment 101 into a learning organization created a unit culture that could identify opportunities and shift priorities to implement new concepts as the operational environment changed. The first and most critical action that a culture of learning enabled Detachment 101 to achieve was its successful employment of their indigenous partner force. Detachment 101’s success was a direct result of the Kachin hill tribes. The Kachins were a textbook resistance force when analyzed through the lens of modern unconventional warfare (UW) doctrine. According to doctrine, the favorable characteristics of any resistance group for SOF to employ in UW include a willingness to cooperate with the United States, compatible ideology and objectives, and capable resistance leadership.⁴⁴⁴ The Kachin tribes matched these ideal characteristics more so than any other ethnic group in Burma and conveniently occupied the tribal territory that surrounded the critical Myitkyina Airfield. The presence of such a force for OSS employment in Burma was a result of prolonged British-Kachin engagement prior to the war as well as a Clausewitzian element of chance that aligned Detachment 101’s area of operations to their tribal homeland.

Based upon the difficulties that Detachment 101 encountered in April 1945 when a majority of the Kachin levies disbanded, the efficiency that characterized the Myitkyina Campaign would have been difficult to replicate if a majority of the guerrillas originated

⁴⁴³ William Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” *Military Review* (June 1948): 14.

⁴⁴⁴ United States Army, ATP 3-05.1, *Unconventional Warfare*, 1-5.

from other ethnic groups in Burma. In fact, it was the personal opinion of Ray Peers that full responsibility for Detachment 101's entire accomplishments fell on the shoulders of the Kachins.⁴⁴⁵ Despite early turnover of competent Anglo-Indian agents from the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), Detachment 101's early long range penetrations learned that the most preferred forces for surrogate warfare were indigenous natives from the tentative operational area. The characteristics of a learning organization provided Lieutenant Wilkinson with the operational freedom to establish the FORWARD group and recruit Kachins for what was intended to be a small size reconnaissance force. The cultural skills learned from each interaction between FORWARD operatives and the Kachins fed future recruitment efforts and enabled KNOTHEAD to achieve rapid success under Vincent Curl. This ideal of local forces fighting in their local areas continued in the future when Detachment 101 recruited Shans and Chins in operations south of Lashio. However, the organization remained flexible enough to identify the weaknesses in these new indigenous personnel and countered these weaknesses with structural reorganization and maximum employment of the remaining Kachin and Karen warriors.

The second critical action that Detachment 101's transition into learning organization enabled was the development of campaign planning capability that could link small unit decentralized operations to higher strategic objectives. Under Carl Eifler, the small size of Detachment 101's operations section prevented any "big picture" analysis or detailed planning to develop a supporting concept for General Stillwell's campaign in Burma. The primary obstacles to this initial capability were the lack of available personnel to establish planning cells from 1942 to 1943, but most importantly,

⁴⁴⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 222.

the narrow scope of operational activities that Carl Eifler had advocated for the unit. Eifler, whose energy and aggressive spirit laid the foundation for a results oriented unit, nevertheless failed to understand higher echelon operations and over relied upon his tactical training that he had received in the infantry and the OSS Special Operations training course at Camp X. Furthermore, Eifler had only recently transitioned to active duty just prior to Pearl Harbor in late 1941. Eifler's professional military education and background was far below the required depth to operationalize the small sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and espionage actions of the OSS to support NCAC's campaign plan.

Conversely, Ray Peers served on active duty since his commission in the inter-war period and he was already an instructor at Fort Benning when Coughlin recruited him for the OSS. Peers clearly understood higher operational planning and made a dedicated effort to develop the detachment's training and operations section to not only match any regular army unit, but to execute the peculiar staff functions of a special operations and guerrilla warfare unit. Peers would eventually rise through his career to serve in the Central Intelligence Agency, command the 4th Infantry Division, and finally retire as a Lieutenant General Commanding at the Corps level in the Vietnam War. Clearly, Ray Peers was an outstanding officer who performed well at any task throughout his career. His position as the commander of Detachment 101 for the critical campaign for Myitkyina capitalized on his strengths in training, organization, small unit tactics, administrative records keeping, and operational art.

Peers advocated that one of the major lessons of Detachment 101's operations in Burma was the importance of developing higher-level direction and plans that could

provide maximum support to theater level operational objectives.⁴⁴⁶ When ample personnel arrived in 1944 from Washington, Peers was able to build a staff organization that could plan operations to support Stillwell's ALBACORE concept in Northern Burma. With Peers at the head of this staff organization and area commanders executing decentralized operations under the principles of mission command, Detachment 101 headquarters developed broad plans and directives that supported not only Stillwell's NCAC but also Slim's 14th Army, the 10th Air Force, and SEAC as a whole.⁴⁴⁷

Detachment 101's organization was unique in comparison to any other OSS unit in that it was a hybrid structure that ignored OSS branch distinction and it possessed such a robust staff that it could plan and support operations to a level commensurate with a division staff. Consequently, Detachment easily conducted stakeholder analysis of the various commands in Northern Burma to identify and support each commander's military objectives and fully integrated itself into the essential framework of the CBI Theater. Throughout the organization, the removal of branch distinctions and compartmentalized activities integrated what in other OSS units were separate elements into a single coordinated effort.⁴⁴⁸

The final critical action that Detachment 101's development into a learning organization enabled was the establishment of a liaison network that could ensure SOF-CF interdependence and achieve strategic level influence within the US Government. Eifler understood the importance of social networking and capitalized on personal

⁴⁴⁶ Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 19.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴⁸ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 220.

relationships to ingratiate the unit with Stillwell, as well as select the best potential operatives for service in Burma. Almost immediately upon arrival into theater, Detachment 101 established liaison with the SOE. This SOE influence in Burma mirrored Donovan's close relationship with Winston Churchill that enabled access to the SIS and SOE prior to the America's entry into the Second World War. Failures during the initial A Group Long Range Penetrations to coordinate with Wingate's Chindits generated the need, through Peers' lessons learned system, to develop liaison with other British Special Operations Units besides the SOE. Eifler continued this effort by building relationships with the USAAF for simple logistical support. However, this effort developed into a long-term liaison that could support personnel recovery operations and provide intelligence to USAAF aerial interdiction.⁴⁴⁹

Peers continued to expand the detachment's liaison network after he took command, further capitalizing on the influx of OSS personnel in 1944. Detachment 101 systematically established liaison officers in various allied commands and units to include: NCAC, the 10th Air Force, the 14th Army, SEAC, P Division, the SOE, the Chindits, Merrill's Marauders, and the Mars Task Force. Peers continued to employ talent management to select the right people for these positions instead of random assignment for officers to fulfill. The result was a network that spread OSS strategic messaging across the CBI Theater and gained a level of influence far greater than any similar sized unit could achieve.⁴⁵⁰ Peers informed Donovan that he believed "that one of the outstanding reasons for the assistance and cooperation rendered [to] this Detachment

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 221.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

has been through liaison.”⁴⁵¹ Detachment 101 came to adopt the same level of inter-personal tact and social networking that Donovan had come to embody for the entire OSS. Peers further remarked that this less than glamorous skill was a critical component of for any military operation stating, “when a person is in the military service, he meets people, makes friends and associations that last for a lifetime . . . no matter where you go you continually meet old friends, and it simplifies getting the job done.”⁴⁵²

Recommendations

Lieutenant General Samuel Wilson, who served in the OSS, Merrill’s Marauders, and later commanded the 6th Special Forces Group stated that Special Forces patterned its doctrine more so on the operations of Detachment 101 than any other special operations unit.⁴⁵³ This assessment is far from hyperbole. During the initial development of the US Army Psychological Warfare Center in 1952, Major General Robert McClure sought special operations expertise from officers who had served the OSS SO branch, OSS Detachment 101, OSS OGs, Merrill’s Marauders, and US Army Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon.⁴⁵⁴ For students of irregular warfare the development of Detachment 101’s Kachin Rangers and its supporting underground and auxiliary networks can serve as a doctrinal template for the conduct of an unconventional warfare campaign in support of general war objectives.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 36.

⁴⁵³ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 223.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 224.

After the Second World War, Ray Peers identified several principles of guerrilla operations that he believed were constant fundamentals in any theater or operational environment. These five principles were intelligence, tactics, planning, supply, and personnel.⁴⁵⁵ Peers stated the first step in any surrogate force operation was the “proper introductions.”⁴⁵⁶ He further explained that American forces must initially develop a thorough and efficient intelligence system in any proposed area of operations that could determine which resistance forces to support and then towards what targets to direct this force.⁴⁵⁷ Modern UW doctrine expresses this initial assessment through intelligence as a function of a special operations pilot team.⁴⁵⁸ However, Detachment 101’s combined functions of SO and SI were a critical enabler for the successful accomplishment of any supporting intelligence functions. Whereas modern SOF and intelligence community functions execute these distinct responsibilities, Detachment 101 could rely upon internal specialization to accomplish any required espionage activities.

The importance of tactics requires little explanation. However, Peers affirmed that irregular forces should be employed in purely irregular operations. In what was clearly a criticism of NCAC’s final mission for Detachment 101 in the Shan States, Peers believed that guerrillas were a substitute for insufficient infantry but were unable to execute the same operations as conventional forces.⁴⁵⁹ The high casualty rates in the final months of

⁴⁵⁵ Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma” (July 1948): 18-19.

⁴⁵⁶ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 211.

⁴⁵⁷ Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma” (July 1948): 18.

⁴⁵⁸ United States Army, ATP 3-05.1, *Unconventional Warfare*, 2-9.

⁴⁵⁹ Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma” (July 1948): 18.

the Burmese campaign serve as a warning for the improper employment of Special Operations Forces. Peers further highlighted the importance of other unconventional tactics such as morale operations, which had a tremendous psychological impact upon the Japanese.⁴⁶⁰ Again, the hybrid structure of Detachment 101 and the lack of oversight from higher headquarters enabled a clandestine influence capability that is beyond the operational authority of modern Psychological Operations Forces.

Finally, the Kachin Rangers provide a wealth of historical analysis for unconventional warfare logistical support. Detachment 101 was a pioneering element in the use of aerial resupply techniques to include airborne drops and one of the first combat uses of the helicopter. However, the most important aspects of this logistical capability were adaptation of US Army and OSS supply systems to Kachin and Burmese native culture. Detachment 101 executed creative methods to exchange US currency into something that could easily be exchanged in Burmese black markets and into something that would provide intrinsic value in the Kachin Mountains where currency was unused.⁴⁶¹ Just as with so many aspects of the campaign, Detachment 101's ability to adapt to their operational environment was the key to logistical success.

Undoubtedly, the current United States Army Special Warfare community owes a great deal of its historical legacy and its early foundational concepts to the efforts of Detachment 101. However, current operators can analyze this unique unit for more than the specific special operations tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). In fact, many of the operational techniques that the detachment employed are long outdated and

⁴⁶⁰ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 214.

⁴⁶¹ Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 61-62.

impractical in the current operational environment. Modern technology has enabled special operations forces to conduct clandestine infiltration into hostile territory while still maintaining continuous communication with higher headquarters on the far side of the earth. The increasing importance of the cyber domain and the proliferation of social media has enabled an entirely new method for the conduct of unconventional warfare without even entering the Joint Special Operations Area. Consequently, the most important lessons for current and future SOF are Detachment 101's success in the constant and unwavering human dynamics of special warfare. In this sense, the Kachin Rangers continue to offer a wealth of organizational lessons that have yet to receive their deserved attention due to the spectacular nature their tactical actions against the Japanese. The source of these tactical successes was Detachment 101's ability to adapt and react to changes in the operational environment faster than their adversaries. This has proven to be a critical skill throughout the history of warfare and will likely continue to be in the future.

First, modern Special Operations units should look to Detachment 101 as a model learning organization. For those members of the special operations community who may challenge the importance of this organizational concept, Detachment 101 provides a logical validation for how a culture of learning can enable a unit to generate options and capitalize on emerging successes in dynamic environments. The Army's new operating concept, *Win in a Complex Environment*, identifies many objective force capabilities that are inherent byproducts of learning organizations. These objectives include "agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders who thrive in conditions of uncertainty and chaos" and those that are capable of "visualizing, describing, directing, leading, and assessing

operations in complex environments.”⁴⁶² Detachment 101 is one of many historical proofs of concept for a learning organization’s ability to succeed in any complex environment. The transformation of SOCOM units into learning organizations and the pre-requisite inculcation of operators into a learning cultural should be a top priority for all future SOF leaders.

The specific actions that enabled Detachment 101’s development into a learning organization are also an example for emulation in other Special Operations Units. Analysis has determined that the critical elements that enabled Detachment 101 to become a learning organization were a mixture of the right personnel, unit culture, operational freedom, and leadership. Personnel selection has long been a critical discriminator for ascension into Special Operations units. However, Ray Peers further codified the specific attitude of the OSS personnel assigned to Detachment 101 and its impact on the unit’s effectiveness.

“The Jaunty, devil-may-care attitude of some of our junior officers and NCO’s, arriving fresh from the States with a gung-ho spirit was turned, through intensive training, into effective and dependable leadership. Any man who lost this spirit in training and decided not to go into the field could have numerous useful alternative jobs at base. Yet in three years of operation only one man ever indicated he did not want to go to the field.”⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² United States Army, *US Army Operating Concept Win in a Complex World*, 32.

⁴⁶³ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 216-217.

Peers further cited that although volunteers were obviously trained and screened by the OSS prior to their assignment to Detachment 101, the unit ran its own training and screening process. Specifically, every OSS operative completed a two-week training and selection course at the Nazria Jungle School that evaluated the abilities of both officers and enlisted personnel to operate independently as well as a team.⁴⁶⁴ Current models for selection and assessment use a combination of team building events, psychological screening, and individual tasks to evaluate suitability for special service. Selection programs such as Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) should build on these “initial assessments” and provide individually focused assessments that empower candidates with wide operational latitude and self-induced stress in vague environments to evaluate their ability operate independently and generate novel solutions to problems in their environment. A perfect alignment of skill, motivation, and autonomy are the necessary character traits for operators that can adapt to unforeseen situations. Currently these selection methods exist within only niche special operations units. During the Second World War, this independent evaluation against an unknown to non-existent standard was exactly the type of culmination exercise executed by Special Operations Branch personnel at B Camp or Camp X.

Ray Peers is a case study in special operations leadership and one of the driving factors that enabled the Kachin Rangers’ success. His organizational skills, dynamic personality, and the use of mission orders empowered his subordinates while at the same time building the confidence of lateral units and higher commands in the CBI Theater. Although the doctrinal term did not exist during the Second World War, the philosophy

⁴⁶⁴ Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma” (July 1948): 19.

of mission command was prevalent throughout the military. Peers and furthermore, the entire Kachin Ranger Organization adhered to these principles, mostly because of their light infantry background and operational necessity. This lesson applies for future conflicts where modern command and control capabilities create a tendency for senior commands to micro-manage operations. Micro-management is the antithesis of a learning organization and furthermore, the death knell for the successful conduct of Special Warfare.

Supporting this learning environment, Peers established a successful lessons learned system that became an integrated constant throughout the entire organization. In the current SOF community, after action reviews and lessons learned reports receive superficial attention, and information is poorly disseminated throughout the force. SOCOM does not lack for a system to capture these lessons learned, and a robust repository of SOF after action reviews already exists. However, the critical shortcoming is the lack of universal interest in the upkeep or utilization of this system. The value of a lessons learned system and a method for codifying the value of these after action reviews is apparent in Detachment 101's ability to spread the latest techniques throughout the force. SOF units that are learning organizations will value these reports and actively seek self-improvement.

Another critical element of success that modern SOF can learn from Detachment 101 was their successful employment of their Kachin indigenous forces through cultural expertise. Current ARSOF standards require language proficiency as a critical requirement for Special Forces and Psychological Operations. However, these resident language skills were non-existent in Detachment 101. This is not to imply that the OSS

did not seek this language capability. In fact, one of Eifler's first recruits for the detachment was a US Army Physician who knew Chinese Mandarin. There was simply a lack of Burmese language expertise in the 1940s America. However, Detachment 101 sought to overcome this cultural shortcoming from its initial activation. Peers recalled that each man conducted a detailed area analysis of Burma prior to their arrival in 1942.⁴⁶⁵

Detachment 101's learning culture and its acknowledgment of the importance of nuanced cultural knowledge was apparent from the onset of combat operations. Based on feedback from the initial long range penetrations, the detachment recognized the importance of employing indigenous troops in their own indigenous areas. The results were a focus on the Kachin States and the beginning of a close relationship with the Kachin tribes. Furthermore, OSS operatives recognized methods to rapidly assimilate and learn Kachin cultures through their close relationships with Christian missionaries. By the end of the campaign, the Kachin Rangers had gained an intimate understanding of the ethnic and tribal dynamics throughout the entire state of Burma. Future Special Forces soldiers will likely find themselves operating in remote tribal and ethnic areas where language and cultural knowledge is minimal or non-existent prior to conflict. The critical component for the success of special warfare organizations is a unit's collective ability to rapidly assimilate into an indigenous force's culture as well as rapidly learn language skills on the ground.

The next lesson for modern SOF is Detachment 101's operational planning capability and expansive network of liaison officers. Peers' background in higher level

⁴⁶⁵ Peers, *Behind the Burma Road*, 44.

planning coupled with an influx of OSS personnel in 1944 enabled the detachment to establish a headquarters staff equivalent to a US Army Division. However, the size of the staff was less consequential than what the staff could accomplish. Peers directed that OSS plans should nest into higher NCAC campaigns as well as adjacent organizational operations.⁴⁶⁶ Operational design and operational art were critical skills for both Peers and the Detachment 101 planning section. Donovan fundamentally relieved Eifler for his inability to transition Detachment 101 from a tactical to a strategic organization. For the action-oriented operators of the current force, Eifler's mindset is far from dead. Current SOF doctrine highlights the importance of detailed planning, but this has focused on purely tactical problem sets. Professional military education must provide SOF peculiar instruction in the elements of operational design and cultivate operational art in future SOF leaders. This skill is critical for SOF to achieve its full potential not only as a force multiplier for conventional warfare, but in order to support Donovan's vision of irregular warfare as an independent means to achieve US foreign policy.

Supporting this effort must include a global SOF network that can achieve liaison for SOF-CF interdependence and provide seamless interconnectivity with inter-agency partners. Detachment 101 selected high quality officers and NCOs to serve as liaisons with conventional forces and these positions were highly valued within the organization. Modern SOF tends not to send its most capable personnel on these LNO assignments, preferring instead field assignments that support traditional career model timelines. ARSOF must attempt to codify career progression models for NCOs and Officers that include LNO positions at later stages in their careers. The loss of special operations

⁴⁶⁶ Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma" (July 1948): 19.

expertise due to poor career models results in an overall loss of capability for the force. These individuals would serve as excellent and influential liaisons across the DOD and the inter-agency. Currently, poor talent management generally places young and inexperienced personnel in these positions rather than highly experienced individuals.

Future research on Detachment 101's combat capabilities is far from exhausted. Although there are a few remaining veterans, oral interviews with surviving members of Detachment 101 would be of incredible value to future Special Operations personnel and the historical records of the Second World War. Specifically, interviews with Detachment 101 survivors should focus on their ability to assimilate Kachin culture as well as their collective methods for information dissemination. Further research into available OSS records may also provide insight into the operational design methodologies that the Kachin Rangers used to plan their overarching campaign to support General Stillwell and General Sultan. Comparison of higher-level plans with operation orders sent to the various subordinate commands can provide detailed information as to the level of detail in the unit's mission orders. If research can produce a viable example of a planning chain extending from Stillwell's headquarters through Peer's staff and down to a subordinate area commander's tactical plans, modern students of special operations mission command will have a historical example to study.

Special Operations Forces have a deep-rooted presence in the fabric of American military history. Tracing their lineage to the Rangers of the French and Indian War or the US Marines' employment of a surrogate army in Tripoli, the daring actions of these irregular warriors echoes throughout the history of the Republic. However, the modern rise of SOF is a direct result of the Second World War. Across all fronts, these elite

formations enabled allied victory through the achievement of effects disproportional to their small size. General Eisenhower declared that the OSS and SOE resistance movements had achieved the equivalent work of fifteen infantry divisions.⁴⁶⁷

Conventional commanders such as Douglas MacArthur often viewed these irregular formations with suspicion and fought to keep this “ungentlemanly form of warfare” out of their respective theaters. However, the Second World War was a total war for the survival of western democracy and consequently any method to combat the Axis Powers was viable. It was in this environment that Wild Bill Donovan used his personal influence with the President of the United States to expand his new vision of warfare. Donovan’s vision included espionage, guerrilla warfare, raids against strategic targets, political subversion, and psychological warfare. Furthermore, Donovan envisioned a three phase special operations form of warfare that could easily support conventional operations or achieve its own operational end state depending on the theater conditions. This form of warfare would become equally indispensable in both the total war against fascism and in the savage wars of peace that came to define the latter half of the Twentieth Century.

Arguably, the most influential of these early SOF units was the Office of Strategic Services Detachment 101. As America’s first effort in the formal conduct of Unconventional Warfare, this unit began as a small contingent focused on tactical sabotage and grew into a division size force that served as sole maneuver unit for a major combat theater. Future father of the Green Berets and OSS veteran, Colonel Aaron Bank,

⁴⁶⁷ Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986), 135.

would later recall that the activities conducted in Burma by “101 Detachment furnished a firm foundation for the type of operations conducted by Special Forces in Vietnam and adjacent areas of what was formerly Indochina.”⁴⁶⁸

Although the threat of communism has subsided, the proliferation of asymmetric threats had increased exponentially since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The Global War on Terror, the Second Israeli-Hezbollah War, and the Syrian Civil War have demonstrated the ability of hybrid threats to counter a traditional military’s strengths in organization and technology, specifically the application of overwhelming firepower. For the United States, special operations forces have become the lead force in the conduct of these irregular wars. The ability of America’s Special Operations Forces to assess and adapt to any environment, local culture, adversary, and mission set is imperative given present and future challenges. Detachment 101 provides modern Special Operators with a model organization that could adapt and evolve to changing conditions while still successfully conducting combat operations. Whether in the deserts of the Middle East or the mega-cities of the future, the past still provides salient lessons for today’s force. Detachment 101’s mission began with a simple task to produce “booms in the jungle.” Seventy years later, the influence of this organization still echoes through history and across the special operations community.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 205.

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